





IRELAND
CONTROVERSY

I



1796









Henry Latham, M.A.



566 Very rare

with Malin's Character of
Lyonsbitt. Autograph of
Lyonsbitt. and the Portraits
also added

566

144515
Part written

7-44-24

Be so good as to
leave the papers that
are stuck in the leaves,
as you find them.

V. III. p. 102. Hayles. See Chaucer, v. 12586. note.

p. 227. Glen ex, as Duke of Buck^m in 1611.

p. 243. It is rather extraordinary, that Mr
C. in extracting Gower's Sr. of wit, should have
entirely overlooked the line from Henry 6.

Very truly Yrs
That he should not appear to have read
any part of Chaucer, but Tristram & Iseult
and that so imperfectly as to assert, p. 465
that "the Pandarus of Ch. has nothing comical
or Pandar-like about him?"

One should have thought that Pericles
might have led him to look into Gower,
but I do not see that he has a single
extract from Gower, — or from Sir
Th. Spenser's Arcadia.

with the above writing was sent
to me by my poor friend Mr
Tyowhitt, when ^{he} returned the
volumes of Capell's Notes
& School - which I had lent
him.

————— Jam monte potitus,
Bidet anhelantem dura ad vestigia turbam.

Bought at Mr. Malone's Sale 1818.
A. Roader.

The amiable and most learned
editor of Chaucer's Canterbury
Tales died of a dysentery at
his house in Welbeck Street,
on Tuesday August, 15, 1786, aged
about 56.

His gentleness, modesty,
and integrity, were equal
to his learning, which was
consummate in Greek, Latin,
and all the modern languages.
In accurate investigation
of whatever subject he
considered, I believe, he never
has been surpassed; and I
much doubt whether England
has produced a more profound
scholar. A few really there is
none such now remaining.

I had promised to myself some pleasure from presenting my edition of Shakspeare to this most acute and ingenious critic, and from his approbation of my labours: but how vain and delusive are all our hopes! Perhaps the hand that is now writing may be as cold ~~as~~ poor Tyrwhitt's, before Shakspeare is ready to issue from the press. Ten days only have passed since I sat half an hour in his library, and he then had only a slight ailment.

J. Malone, August 16, 1786.



Al thogh hys lyf be queynt the resemblance
 Of hym hath in me so fresh lysterlynesse
 That to putte other men in remembrance
 Of hys p'sone I haue here hys lykenesse
 To make to thys ende in sothfastnesse
 That they y^e haue of hym lost yonre and mynde
 By thys picture may a geyn hym fynde

THE
CANTERBURY TALES
OF
CHAUCE R.

To which are added;

An ESSAY upon his LANGUAGE and
VERSIFICATION; an INTRODUCTORY
DISCOURSE; and NOTES.

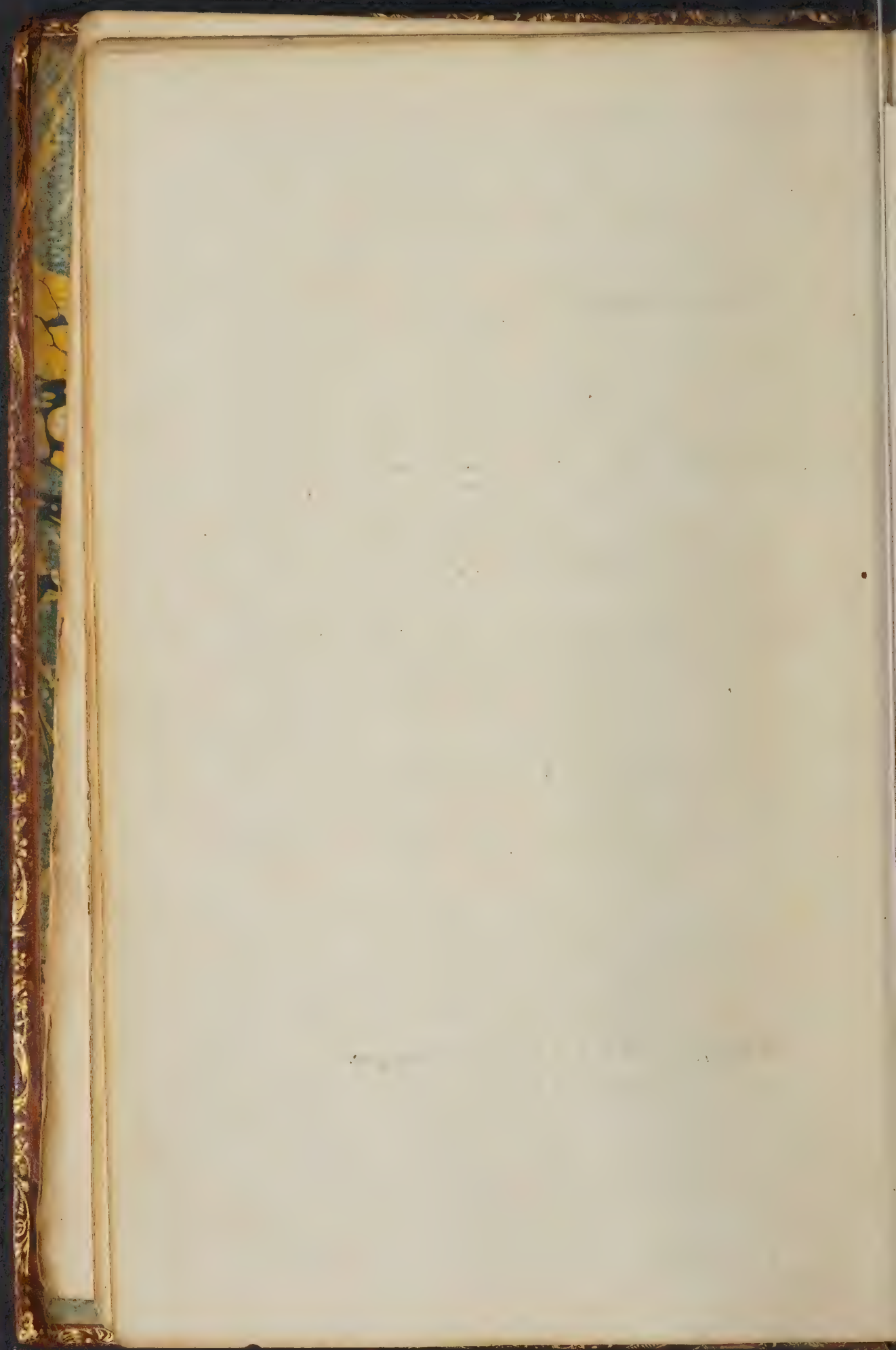
IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N,

Printed for T. PAYNE, at the Mews-gate.

MDCCCLXXV.



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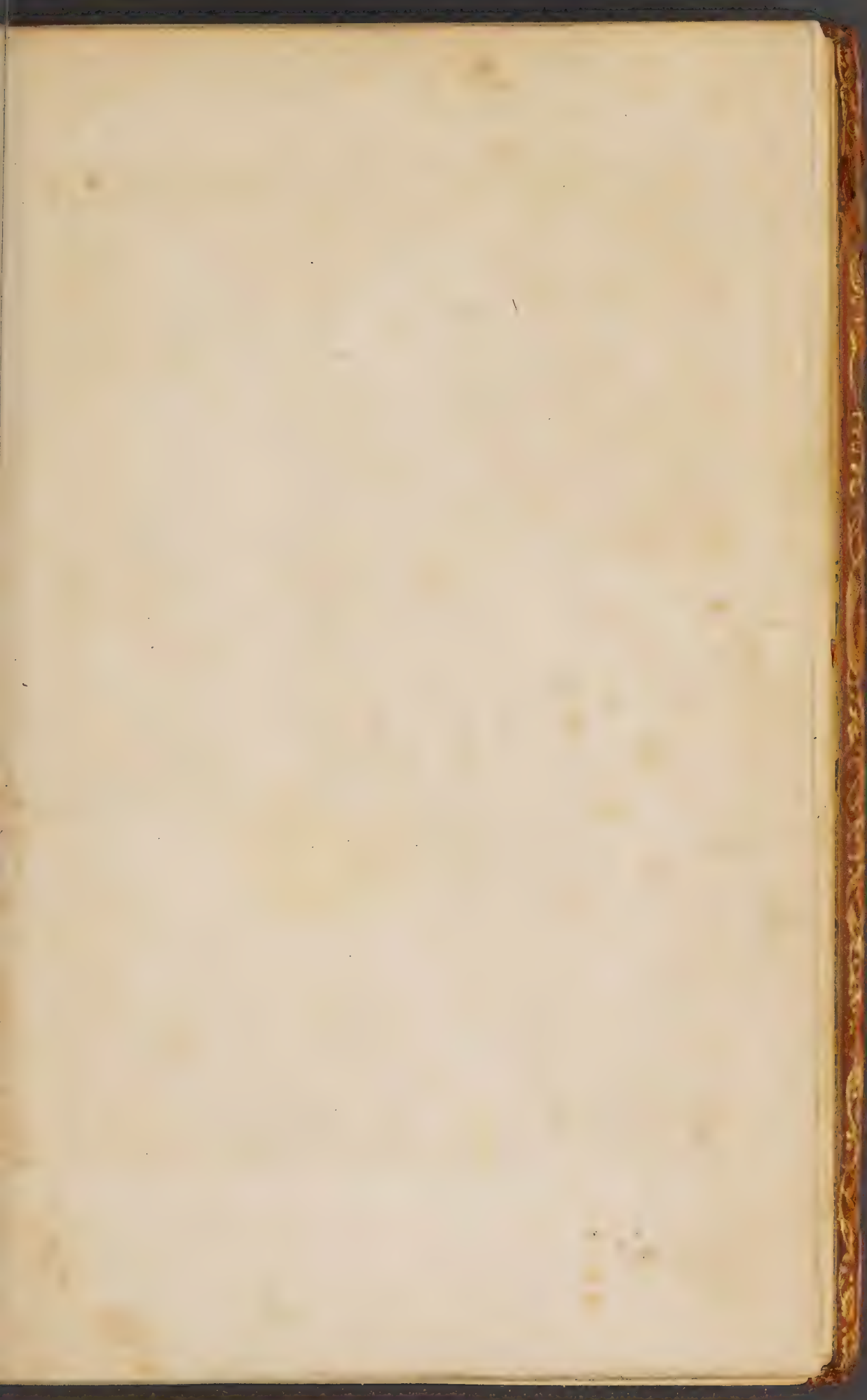
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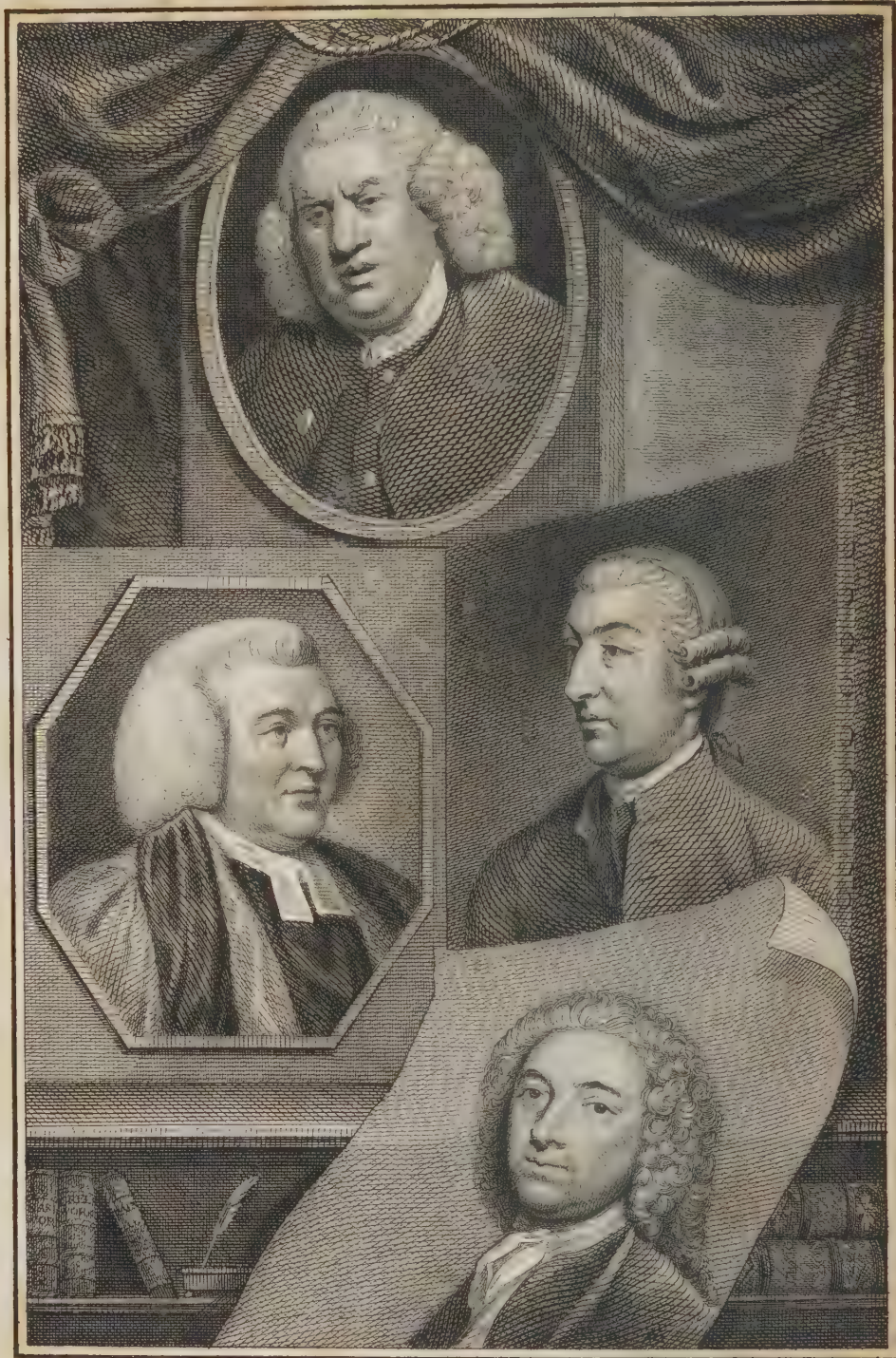
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Engraved by Tho^d Holloway.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, L.L.D. RICHARD FARMER, D.D.
THOMAS TYRWHITT, Esq. THOMAS EDWARDS, Esq.

T H E P R E F A C E.

THE first object of this publication was to give the text of THE CANTERBURY TALES as correct as the Mss. within the reach of the Editor would enable him to make it.

The account of former Editions, in the Appendix to this Preface (A), will shew, that this object had hitherto been either entirely neglected, or at least very imperfectly pursued. The Editor therefore has proceeded as if his author had never been published before. He has formed the text throughout from the Mss. and has paid little regard to the readings of any edition, except the two by Caxton, each of which may now be considered as a Manuscript. A List of the Mss. collated, or consulted, upon this occasion is subjoined (B).

In order to make the proper use of these Mss., to unravel the confusions of their orthography, and to judge between a great number of various readings, it was necessary to enquire into the state of our language and versification at the time when Chaucer wrote, and also, as much as was possible, into the peculiarities of his style and manner of composition. Nor was it less necessary to examine with some attention the work now intended

to be republished; to draw a line between the imperfections, which may be supposed to have been left in it by the author, and those which have crept into it since; to distinguish the parts where the author appears as an inventor, from those where he is merely a translator, or imitator; and throughout the whole to trace his allusions to a variety of forgotten books and obsolete customs. As a certain degree of information upon all these points will be found to be necessary even for the reading of the *Canterbury tales* with intelligence and satisfaction, the Editor hopes he shall be excused for supposing, that the majority of his readers will not be displeased with his attempt to shorten at least the labour of their enquiries, by laying before them such parts of the result of his own researches, as he judges will be most conducive to that purpose. He has therefore added to the text, 1. AN ESSAY * ON THE LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION OF CHAUCER;
2. AN

* In this ESSAY, p. 46—73. is contained a short view of English Poetry to the time of Chaucer, the trouble of compiling which the Editor might perhaps have saved himself, if he had foreseen, that Mr. Warton's HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY would have appeared so soon. Both the *Essay* and the

Intro-

2. AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES; and 3. NOTES, into which he has thrown an account of the most material various readings; illustrations of particular passages; and explanations of the most uncommon words and phrases, especially such as are omitted, or ill explained, in the Glossary to Urry's Edition.

He had once an intention of adding a Glossary, and a Life of Chaucer. From the former of these undertakings he was deterred by the bulk to which this publication had already swollen, and by the consideration, that a Glossary, adapted to a part only of Chaucer's writings, must necessarily be a very imperfect work, the utility of which would by no means be proportionable to the labour employed in compiling it. If this attempt, to invite the attention of the public to their too much neglected bard, should so far succeed as to bring to light any Mss. by the help of which, together with those

Introductory Discourse were printed before Mr. Warton's book was published; which is mentioned, not so much to obviate any suspicion of plagiarism, as to apologize for whatever defects there may be in either of those treatises, from a want of the lights, which that learned and elegant writer has thrown upon all parts of this subject.

in the Bodleian and other Libraries, the remainder of the writings of Chaucer might be restored to a tolerable degree of purity, a good Glossary to the whole would be a most useful work, and indeed would answer all the purposes of a Dictionary of our antient Language.

With respect to a life of Chaucer, he found, after a reasonable waste of time and pains in searching for materials, that he could add few *facts* to those, which have already appeared in several lives of that poet; and he was not disposed, either to repeat the comments and inventions, by which former biographers have endeavoured to supply the deficiency of facts, or to substitute any of his own for the same laudable purpose. Instead therefore of a formal life of his author, which, upon these principles, must have been a very meagre narration, he has added to this Preface (C) a short ABSTRACT OF THE HISTORICAL PASSAGES OF THE LIFE OF CHAUCER, with remarks, which may serve to separate for the future those passages from others, which have nothing to recommend them to credit, but the single circumstance of having been often repeated.

He will detain the reader no longer than just to desire his indulgence for the *Errata*, which are specified in the annexed table. Those

THE PREFACE.

of the Printer are distinguished by Italics. Of the rest the Editor must take the shame to himself. They are owing partly to his having omitted to insert the true readings in the copy prepared for the press, and partly to his having imprudently adopted some less authorized readings, and even conjectures, instead of the readings of the best Mss. When the passages here pointed out are corrected, he does not recollect to have deviated from the Mss. (except, perhaps, by adding the final *n* to a very few words) in any one instance, of which the reader is not advertised in the notes.

J. Tyrwhitt

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(A) AN ACCOUNT OF FORMER EDITIONS OF THE
CANTERBURY TALES.

THE Art of Printing had been invented and exercised for a considerable time, in most countries of Europe, before the Art of Criticism was called in to superintend and direct its operations. It is therefore much more to the honour of our meritorious countryman William Caxton, that he chose to make the Canterbury Tales one of the earliest productions of his press, than it can be to his discredit, that he printed them very incorrectly. He probably took the first Ms. that he could procure to print from, and it happened unluckily to be one of the worst in all respects that he could possibly have met with. The very few copies of this Edition, which are now remaining (*a*), have no date, but Mr. Ames supposes it to have been printed in 1475 or 6.

It is still more to the honour of Caxton, that when he was informed of the imperfections of his edition, he very readily undertook a second, "for to satisfy the author," (as he says himself,) "whereas tofore

(*a*) The late Mr. West was so obliging as to lend me a complete copy of this Edition, which is now, as I have heard, in the King's Library.† There is another complete copy in the Library of Merton College, which is illuminated, and has a ruled line under every printed one, to give it the appearance, I suppose, of a Ms. Neither of these books, though seemingly complete, has any Preface or Advertisement,

by
† It sold at Mr West's Sale for
£47. 15. 6.

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by ignorance *he* had erred in hurting and diffaming his book." His whole account of this matter, in the Preface to this second Edition, is so clear and ingenuous, that I shall insert it below in his own words (*b*). This
Edition

(*b*) Pref. to Caxton's 2d Edit. from a copy in the Library of St. John's Coll. Oxford. Ames, p. 55.—Whiche book I have dyligently overfen, and duly examyned to the ende that it be made accordyng unto his owen makyng; for I fynde many of the fayd bookes, whiche wryters have abrydgyd it, and many thynges left out, and in some places have sette certayn versys that he never made ne sette in hys booke; of whyche bookes so incorrekte was one broughte to me vi. yere passyd, whiche I supposyd had ben veray true and correkte, and accordyng to the same I dyde do enprynte a certayn nomber of them, whyche anon were folde to many and dyverse gentyl men, of whom one gentylman cam to me, and sayd that this book was not according in many places unto the book that Gefferey Chaucer had made. To whom I answered, that I had made it accordyng to my cotype, and by me was nothyng added ne mynushyd. Thenne he sayd, he knewe a book whyche hys fader had and moche lovyd, that was very trewe, and accordyng unto hys owen first book by hym made; and sayd more, yf I wold enprynte it agayn, he wold gete me the same book for a cotype. How be it he wyft well that hys fader wold not gladly departe fro it. To whom I said, in caas that he coude gete me suche a book, trewe and correkte, yet I wold ones endevoyre me to enprynte it agayn, for to satisfy the auctour, where as tofore by ygnoraunce I erryd in hurting and dyffamyng his book in dyverce places, in setting in somme thynges that he never sayd ne made, and leving out many thynges that he made, whyche ben requysite to be sette in it. And thus we fyll at accord, and he full gen-
tylly

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Edition is also without date, except that the Preface informs us, that it was printed six years after the first.

Ames mentions an Edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, "Collected by William Caxton, and printed by Wynken de Worde at Westmestre, in 1495. Folio." He does not appear to have seen it himself, nor have I ever met with any other authority for its existence; which however I do not mean to dispute. If there was such an Edition, we may be tolerably sure, that it was only a copy of Caxton's.

This was certainly the case of both Pynson's Editions. He has prefixed to both the introductory part of Caxton's Prohemye to his 2d Edition, without the least alteration. In what follows, he says, that he purposes to imprint his book [in the first Edition] *by a copy of the said Master Caxton*, and [in the second] *by a copy of William Caxton's imprinting (c)*. That the Copy,

rylly gate of hys fader the said book, and delyvered it to me, by whiche I have corrected my book, as heere after alle alonge by the ayde of almighty God shal folowe, whom I humbly beseeche &c.

Mr. Lewis in his Life of Caxton, p. 104. has published a minute account of the contents of this edition from a copy in the Library of Magdalen College, Cambridge, but without deciding whether it is the first or the second edition.

It is undoubtedly the second; but the Preface is lost. There is an imperfect copy of this edition in the Museum, and another in the Library of the Royal Society. Both together would not make a complete one.

(c) See the *Prohemies* to Pynson's 1st and 2d Editt. in the Preface to Urry's Chaucer. There is a complete copy of Pynson's 1st Edit. in the Library of the Royal Society.

mentioned

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mentioned in both these passages, by which Pynson purposed to imprint, was really Caxton's second Edition, is evident from the slightest comparison of the three books. Pynson's first Edition has no date, but is supposed (upon good grounds, I think) to have been printed not long after 1491, the year of Caxton's death. His second Edition (*d*) is dated in 1526, and was the first in which a Collection of some other pieces of Chaucer was added to the Canterbury Tales.

The next Edition, which I have been able to meet with, was printed by Thomas Godfray in 1532.† If this be not the very edition which Leland speaks of (*e*) as printed by Berthelette, with the assistance of Mr.

(*d*) I venture to call this Pynson's 2d Edit. though Ames (from some notes of Bagford) speaks of Editions in 1520 and 1522. He does not appear to have seen them himself. Mr. West had a copy of the edition of 1526, in which the name of the printer and the date of the impression are regularly set down at the end of the Canterbury Tales. After that follow "*Troilus and Creseide*" and "*the Boke of Fame*," at the end of which last is a note, copied from Caxton's edition of the same book, with this addition. *And here foloweth another of his workes.* But in Mr. West's copy nothing followed. The writer of the Preface to Ed. Urr. seems to have had the use of a copy of this Edition in 1526, which contained some other pieces of Chaucer's, and several by other hands. See the Pref. to Ed. Urr.

(*e*) I think it necessary to state Leland's account of the editions of Chaucer in his own words, from Tanner's *Bibl. Brit.* v. Chaucer. "Non alienum meo erit instituto palam facere, *Gulielmum Caxodunum*, hominem nec indiligentem

ncc

† This sold at Mr. West's sale in 1773 for £40:14:6.

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Mr. William Thynne, (as I rather suspect it is,) we may be assured that it was copied from that. Mr.

Thynne's nec indoctum, et quem constat primum Londini artem exercuisse typographicam, *Chauceri* opera, quotquot vel pretio vel precibus comparare potuit, *in unum volumen collegisse*. Vicit tamen Caxodunicam editionem *Bertholetus* noster operâ *Gulielmi Thynni*, qui multo labore, fedulitate, ac curâ usus in perquirendis vetustis exemplaribus, multa *primæ* adjecit *editioni*. Sed nec in hac parte caruit *Brianus Tuca*, mihi familiaritate conjunctissimus, et Anglicæ linguæ eloquentiâ mirificus, suâ gloriâ, editâ in postremam impressionem *præfatione* elimatâ, luculentâ, elegantî. Sequar igitur codicem *paucis abhinc annis* impressum, et promissum adponam syllabon. He then gives a Syllabus of the works of Chaucer, contained in that Edition, as follows. *Fabulæ Cantianæ* xxiv, quarum duæ solutâ oratione scriptæ; sed *Petri Aratoris fabula*, quæ communi doctorum consensu Chaucero, tanquam vero parenti, attribuitur, in utrâque editione, quia malos sacerdotum mores vehementer increpavit, suppressa est. *De arte amandi* alias *Romaunce of the Rose*, &c."

Before I make any remarks upon this account, I must observe that it was drawn up by Leland before the year 1540. This appears from his "New Year's gift to Henry VIII in the xxxvii yeare of his raygne" (1 Jan. 1546) in which he says expressly, that he had spent the last six years in travelling about the kingdom, "all his other occupations intermitted" [Ed. 1745. p. xxii. prefixed to Leland's *Itin.* v. i.];" so that his book *De Viris illustribus*, which he speaks of as finished in the same piece, p. xxi. must have been finished before he set out upon his travels. I will observe too, by the way, that the Biographers of Leland seem to have confounded these last six years travels with

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Thynne's Dedication to Henry VIII stands at the head of it; and the great number of Chaucer's works, never

with his former travels, in execution of the Commission granted to him by Henry VIII, to ferche the Libraries of Monasteries, Colleges, &c. That Commission was granted in the year 1533, 25 H. VIII. but how many years he spent in the execution of it, there is no authority, that I can find, for determining with precision.

In the account above-quoted, Leland is certainly mistaken in saying that Caxton *collected* the works of Chaucer *into one volume*. He printed two Editions of the Canterbury Tales by themselves, as has been shewn above. He also printed Boethius, Troilus and Creffida, and the Boke of Fame; but each in a separate volume; and some smaller pieces of Chaucer, intermixed with several of Lydgate, &c. in another volume, of which the contents may be seen in Middleton's Dissert. p. 263. n. [d]; but it does not appear that he ever attempted to collect these separate publications into one volume.

Leland is also inaccurate, at least, in representing the edition by Thynne as coming next after that by Caxton, without taking any notice of the intermediate editions by Pynson, and especially that in 1526, in which an attempt was really made to collect the works of Chaucer into one volume.

It may appear presumptuous to go further, and to charge him with inaccuracy in his description of that very edition by Thynne, which he seems to have had before his eyes, but I am much inclined to suspect, (as I have intimated in the text,) that the edition which he speaks of as printed by Berthelette was really printed by Godfray, and that the Preface of *Brianus Tucca* (Sir Brian Tuke) which he commends

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never before published, which appear in it, fully entitles it to the commendations, which have always been
given

mends so much, was nothing else but the Prefatory address, or Dedication, to the King, which is prefixed to Godfray's and other later editions in the name of Mr. William Thynne. The mistake may not have been so extravagant, as it appears to be at first. It is possible, that Berthelette might be concerned in putting forth the edition of 1532, though it was printed by Godfray; and it is very probable, that the Dedication, (which is in such a style as I think very likely to be commended by Leland,) though standing in the name of Mr. William Thynne, was composed for him by Sir Brian Tuke. Mr. Thynne himself, I apprehend, was rather a lover, than a master, of these studies.

In support of this suspicion I observe 1. that the syllabus, which Leland has given of the contents of Berthelette's edition, agrees exactly enough with the contents of the edition by Godfray, a few small pieces only being omitted by him. 2. The date of Godfray's Edition in 1532 agrees perfectly with what Leland says of the edition in question, (viz. that it was printed *a few years before*,) and with the probable date of Mr. Thynne's edition, which appears to have been published not earlier than 1530, and certainly not later than 1532. It was not published earlier than 1530, because *the French Grammer made by an Englishman*, mentioned in the Dedication, must mean, in all probability, *L'esclaircissement de la langue Françoisse* by John Palgrave, the printing of which was finished by John Hawkins, xviii July, 1530, and the Privilege granted on the 2 September following. It was not later than 1532, because the Dedication appears in Godfray's edition of that year. 3. If Berthelette had printed Mr. Thynne's edition, in 1531 (we will suppose), it is inconceivable that Godfray should set about another edition so immediately as to be able to publish
lish

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given to Mr. Thynne's edition on that account. Accordingly, it was several times reprinted as the standard edition

lish it the very next year. Though the Printers of that age had a very imperfect notion, I apprehend, of Copy-right at Common Law, they may be presumed to have had always a certain Common Sense, which would restrain them from undertaking a new impression of a book, while a considerable number of copies of a former impression remained unfold, whether those copies belonged to themselves or to others. Besides, Godfray's edition has no appearance of a hasty, piratical impression. It is upon a fine paper, and the types and press-work are remarkably neat and elegant. 4. I think we have Berthelette's own authority for believing that he did not print Mr. Thynne's edition of Chaucer. In the Preface to Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, which he published in this very year 1532, after having mentioned *Troilus and Creseide*, he goes on thus: "The whiche noble warke and many other of the fayde Chaufers, that never were before imprinted, and those that very fewe men knewe and fewer hadde them, be now of late put forthe together in a fayre volume." There can be no doubt that in this passage he refers to Mr. Thynne's edition, and if he had printed it himself, I think he would certainly have claimed the honour of it. At the same time, the favourable manner in which he speaks of it, would lead one to imagine, (as has been suggested above,) that he had some concern in it.

Upon the whole therefore I am persuaded, that the edition by Godfray in 1532 is the edition, which Leland speaks of as printed by Berthelette. I have given above what I conjecture to have been the probable grounds of his mistake. But indeed, when we recollect the hurry in which this work

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edition of Chaucer's works, without any material alteration, except the insertion of the Plowman's tale in 1542,

work of Leland must have been compiled, and that it was left by him unfinished, we need not seek for any other causes of the inaccuracies with which it abounds. In the latter part of the passage cited above, he speaks of *The Ploughman's Tale* by the title of *Petri Aratoris fabula*, confounding it, in the title at least, with *Pierce Ploughman's Visions*. For I do not suppose that he meant to attribute *the Visions* to Chaucer; though in fact the one might as well be attributed to him as the other.

Notwithstanding the immoderate length of this note, I must not suppress another testimony, which may be produced in favour of the existence of an Edition of Chaucer by Mr. Thynne, distinct from that printed by Godfray. Mr. Speght in his Life of Chaucer has the following passage: "M. William Thynne in his first printed booke of Chaucers works with one columbe on a side, had a Tale called the Pilgrims tale, which was more odious to the Clergie, than the speach of the Plowman. The tale began thus: *In Lincolneshire fast by a fenne: Standeth a religious house who doth it kenne.* The argument of which tale, as also the occasion thereof, and the cause why it was left out of Chaucers works, shall hereafter be shewed, if God permit, in M. Fran. Thyns coment upon Chaucer: and the Tale itselfe published *if possibly it can be found.*"

It must be allowed that this description of Mr. Thynne's first edition, "with one columne on a side, and a tale called *the Pilgrim's tale*," does not suit the edition printed by Godfray, which is in two columns and has no Pilgrim's tale. But I observe, that Mr. Speght does not pretend to have seen this book. He even doubts whether the Tale *can be found*. If therefore I should be able to prove, that the

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1542, of which I have spoken in the Discourse, &c.
n. 32.

As

the Tale, which he speaks of, could not possibly be in Mr. Thynne's first edition, I presume no great stress will be laid upon the other part of his evidence, in which he supposes that edition to have been printed with only one column on a side.

It appears very strange, at first sight, that the Plowman's Tale (according to Leland) should have been suppressed in Mr. Thynne's edition, *quia malos sacerdotum mores vehementer increpavit*, and that he should have inserted this Pilgrim's tale, which, as Mr. Speght tells us, was still *more odious to the Clergie*. A few years after, when the Reformation was further advanced, in 1542, the Plowman's tale is inserted among Chaucer's works and the Pilgrim's tale is suppressed! But there is no occasion to insist upon these little improbabilities. Though Mr. Speght did not know where to find the Pilgrim's tale, and the Printer of the Edit. in 1687 assures us, that he had searched for it "in the Public libraries of both Universities," and also "in all private libraries that he could have access unto," I have had the good fortune to meet with a copy*. It

* The copy, of which I speak, is in the black letter, and seems to have once made part of a volume of miscellaneous poems in 8vo. The first leaf is numbered xxxi and the last, xlv. *The Pilgrim's tale* begins about the middle of fol. xxxi. *vers.* and continues to the end of the fragment, where it breaks off imperfect. The first leaf has a running title—*Venus The court of*—and contains the ten last lines of one poem, and another whole poem of twenty lines, before *the Pilgrim's tale*.

This curious fragment was purchased at the Auction of Mr. West's library, in a lot (N^o * 1040) of *Sundry fragments of old black-letter books*, by Mr. Herbert of Gulsion's Square, who very obligingly permitted me to examine it.

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As my business here is solely with the Canterbury Tales, I shall take no notice of the several miscellaneous pieces,

is entitled, "*The Pylgrymse tale*," and begins thus:

In Lincolneshyr fast by the fene
Ther stant an hows and you yt ken,
And callyd sempynham of religion
And is of an old foundation, &c.

There can be no doubt, I think, that this is the piece of which Mr. Speght had received some confused intelligence. It seems to have been mentioned by Bale among Chaucer's works, in the following manner. "*Narrationes diversorum, Lib. i. In comitatu Lincolnensi fuit—*" *Script. Brit.* p. 526. Ed. 1559. But it is impossible that any one who had read it should ascribe it to Chaucer. He is quoted in it twice by name, fol. xxxiii. and fol. xlv. and in the latter place the reference seems to be made to a printed book. The reader shall judge.—

He sayd he durst not it disclose,
But bad me reyd the Romant of the Rose,
The thred leafe just from the end,
To *the secund page* ther he did me send,
He prayd me thes vi. stavis for to marke,
Whiche be *Chaucers* awn hand wark.
¶ Thus moche woll our boke sygnify
That while Peter hath mastery, &c.

[Then follow 4 more lines from Chaucer's R. R. v. 7263—8. Ed. Urr.] It is not usual, at least, to cite Mss. by *the leaf* and *the page*. But if this citation was really made from a printed book, the Pilgrim's tale must have been written after Mr. Thynne's edition, for Chaucer's translation of the Romant of the Rose was first printed in that edition. Another passage will fix the date of this composition

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pieces, by Chaucer and others, which were added to them by Mr. Thynne in his Edition, and afterwards by Stowe and Speght in the Editions of 1561, 1597, and 1602. With respect to the Canterbury Tales, I am under a necessity of observing, that, upon the whole, they received no advantage from the edition of 1532. Its material variations from Caxton's *second* edition are all, I think, for the worse. It confounds the order of the *Squier's* (*f*) and the *Frankleyn's* (*g*) tales, which Caxton, in his *second* Edition, had set right. It gives the *Frankleyn's* Prologue to the *Merchant*, in addition to his own proper Prologue (*b*). It produces for the first time two Prologues, the one to

position still more clearly. In fol. xxxix. xl. are the following lines :

Perkin werkek and Jak straw

And now of late *our cobler* the dawe.

One would not expect to find any mention of *Perkin Warbeck* in a work attributed to Chaucer ; but, passing that over, I think it is plain, that *our cobler*, in the second line, means the leader of the Lincolnshire rebels in 1536, who, as Hollinshed tells us, p. 941. " called himself *Captaine Cobler*, but was indeed a monk, named Doctor Mackarell." *The Pilgrim's tale* therefore was not written till after 1536, and consequently could not possibly be in Mr. Thynne's first Edition, which, as has been shewn above, was printed at latest in 1532.

(*f*) See the Discourse, &c. § xxiii. and Note on ver. 10293.

(*g*) See the Discourse, &c. § xxv. and Note on ver. 10985.

(*b*) See the same Section and Note.

b

the

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the *Doctour's*, and the other to the *Shipman's* tale, which are both evidently spurious (*i*); and it brings back the lines of ribaldry (*k*) in the *Merchant's* tale, which Caxton, in his *second* Edition, had rejected upon the authority of his good Mf.

However, this Edition of 1532, with all its imperfections, had the luck, as I have said, to be considered as the standard edition, and to be copied, not only by the Booksellers, in their several Editions (*l*) of 1542, 1546, 1555, and 1561, but also by Mr. Speght, (the first Editor in form, after Mr. Thynne, who set his name to his work,) in 1597 and 1602. In the Dedication to Sir Robert Cecil, prefixed to this last edition, he speaks indeed of having "reformed the whole work, both by old written copies and by Ma. William Thynns praise-worthy labours," but I cannot find that he has departed in any material point from those editions, which I have supposed to be derived from Mr. Thynnes. In the very material points abovementioned,

(*i*) See them in all the Editt. since 1532.

(*k*) See the Note on ver. 10227. The lines themselves are in all the common Editt.

(*l*) There are some other Editions mentioned by Ames, without date, but it is probable that, upon inspection, they would appear to be one or other of the Editions, whose dates are here given. It seems to have been usual to print books in partnership, and for each partner to print his own name to his share of the impression. See Ames, p. 252. A Bible is said to be printed in 1551, by Nicholas Hill—"at the cost and charges of certayne honest menne of the octupacyon, whose names be upon their bookes."

tioned,

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tioned, in which those editions vary from Caxton's second, he has followed *them*. Nor have I observed any such verbal varieties, as would induce one to believe that he had consulted any good Ms. They, who have read his Preface, will probably not regret, that he did not do more towards correcting the text of Chaucer.

In this state the Canterbury Tales remained (*m*) till the edition undertaken by Mr. Urry, which was published, some years after his death, in 1721. I shall say but little of that edition, as a very fair and full account of it is to be seen in the modest and sensi-

(*m*) It may be proper just to take notice, that Mr. Speght's Edition was reprinted in 1687, with an Advertisement at the end, in which the Editor pretended to publish from a Ms. *the Conclusion of the Cook's Tale and also of the Squires Tale, which in the printed books are said to be lost or never finished by the author.*—These Conclusions may be seen in the Preface to Ed. Urr. Whoever the Editor was, I must do him the justice to say, that they are both really to be found in Ms. The first is in Ms. B. *α*. and the other in Ms. B. *δ*. from which Hearne has also printed it, as a choice discovery, in his Letter to Bagford, App. to R. G. p. 601. If I thought the Reader had any relish for such supplements to Chaucer, I could treat him from Ms. B. *α*. with at least thirty more lines, which have been inserted in different parts of *the Cook's Tale*, by the same hand that wrote this Conclusion. It seems to have been an early, though very unsuccessful, attempt to supply the deficiencies of that Tale, before any one had thought of tacking *Gamelyn* to it.

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ble Preface prefixed to it by Mr. Timothy Thomas (*n*), upon whom the charge of publishing Chaucer devolved, or rather was imposed, after Mr. Urry's death. The strange licence, in which Mr. Urry appears to have indulged himself, of lengthening and shortening Chaucer's words according to his own fancy, and of even adding words of his own, without giving his readers the least notice, has made the text of Chaucer in his Edition by far the worst that was ever published.

Since this there has been no complete Edition of the Canterbury Tales. A volume in 8vo containing the Prologue and the Knightes Tale, with large explanatory notes &c. was published in 1737, by a Gentleman, (as I am informed,) who has since distinguished himself by many other learned and useful publications. He appears to have set out upon the only rational

(*n*) I learn this from a Ms. note in an interleaved copy of Urry's Chaucer, presented to the British Museum by Mr. William Thomas, a brother, as I apprehend, of Mr. T. Thomas. T. Thomas was of Christ-Church, Oxford, and died in 1751, aged LIX. In another note Mr. W. Thomas informs us, that the *Life of Chaucer*, in that edition, was very uncorrectly drawn up by Mr. Dart, and corrected and enlarged by W. T. (i. e. himself.) The same Mr. W. Thomas has taken a great deal of unnecessary pains in collating that copy of Urry's Edit. with several Mss. The best part of the various readings serves only to correct the arbitrary innovations, which Mr. Urry had introduced into the text. He has employed himself to better purpose upon the Glossary, where he has made many emendations and additions, which may be of considerable use, if ever a new Glossary to Chaucer shall be compiled.

plan

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plan of publishing Chaucer, by collating the best Mss. and selecting from them the genuine readings; and accordingly his edition, as far as it goes, is infinitely preferable to any of those which preceded it.

b 3

A List

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(B) A LIST OF MSS. COLLATED, OR CONSULTED,
WITH THE ABBREVIATIONS BY WHICH THEY
ARE CITED.

IN THE MUSEUM.

- A. Ms. Harl. 7335.
- B. Ms. Reg. 18 C. ii. In Urry's List, vii.
- C. Ms. Harl. 7334.
- D. Ms. Reg. 17 D. xv. In Urry's List, viii.
- E. Ms. Harl. 7333.
- F. Ms. Harl. 1758. In Urry's List, i.
- G. Ms. Sloane. A. 1685. xxii D. In Urry's List, iii.
- H. Ms. Sloane. A. 1686. xxii. D. In Urry's List, iv.
- I. Ms. Harl. 1239. In Urry's List, ii.

AT OXFORD.

In the *Bodleian Library*.

- B. α. N° 2527. in the printed Catalogue.
- B. 6. N° 1234. Ibid.
- B. γ. N° 1476. Ibid.
- B. δ. N° 3360. Ibid.
- B. ε. N° 4138. Ibid.
- B. ζ. N° 6420. Ibid.

N C. A Ms. in the Library of *New College*.

AT CAMBRIDGE.

- C. 1. In the Publick Library. N° D. d. 4. 24.
- C. 2. Ibid. N° I. i. 3. 26.
- T. Ms. in the Library of *Trinity College*, N° R. 3. 3.
- T t. Ibid. N° R. 3. 15.

Ask.

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Ask. 1. 2. Two Mss. lent to me by the late Dr. Askew. The second has in it the Arms of Henry Deane, Archbishop of Canterbury. 1501—3.

H A. A Ms. lent to me by Edward Haistwell, Esq.

W. A Ms. in the possession of the late Mr. P. C. Webb.

Ch. N. Two Mss. described in the Pref. to Ed. Urr. the one as belonging to Charles Cholmondeley, Esq. of Vale Royal, in Cheshire, and the other to Mr. Norton, of Southwick, in Hampshire. The Editor quotes them from the Collations of Mr. W. Thomas, mentioned above in this App. A. n. (u).

Of these Mss. the most credit is certainly due to the five following, viz. A. C. 1. Ask. 1. 2. and H A. The four last exhibit the Tales in exactly the same order in which they are printed in this edition; and so does A. except that it wants the *Cokes Tale* [See the Discourse, &c. § xiii.], and has the *Nonnes Tale* inserted between the *Sompnours* and the *Clerkes*. It is also unluckily very imperfect; beginning only at ver. 1204. and ending (with several intermediate breaks) at ver. 12610. in the *Pardoner's Tale*.

N. B. The Editt. of Chaucer by Caxton and Pynson are cited by these abbreviations; Ca. 1. 2. Pynf. 1. 2.—Sp. and Urr. are put for the Editt. by Speght and Urry.—M. stands for the Edit. of the *Prologue and Knight's Tale* in 1737.—The other Editt. are cited by their respective dates. If no date is mentioned, the reference is to the Edit. of 1542 by John Reyne.

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(C) AN ABSTRACT OF THE HISTORICAL PASSAGES
OF THE LIFE OF CHAUCER.

THE Birth of Chaucer in 1328 has been settled, I suppose, from some inscription on his tomb-stone, signifying that he died in 1400, at the age of 72. Of his birth itself we have no memorial, any more than of his parents (a). He calls himself a *Londenois*, or *Londoner*, in the *Testament of Love*. B. i. fol. 325. and in another passage, fol. 321. speaks of the city of London as the place of his *engendrure*.

We are more in the dark about the place of his education. In his *Court of Love*, ver. 912. he speaks of himself under the name and character of "Philogenet—of Cambridge, Clerk." This is by no means a decisive proof that he was really educated at Cambridge; but

(a) Mr. Speght has referred to several Records in which the name of Chaucer occurs. There is mention in the *Monast. Ang.* vol. iii. p. 326. of a *Johannes le Chauser, civis Londoniensis*, an. 1299. who may possibly have been our Poet's Grandfather. Though Leland says, that he was *nobili loco natus*, Mr. Speght informs us, that "in the opinion of some heralds—he descended not of any great house, which they gather by his Armes." I am inclined to believe the Heralds, rather than Leland.

The name of *Chaucer* is explained [Life of Ch. Urr.] to signify a *shoe-maker*; but it rather means *un faiseur de chausses ou culottiers*. Dict. de Lacombe, v. *Chaucier*. According to what is said to be the old spelling of it, *Chaucefir*, it might be not improbably derived from *Chaufecire*, an office, which still subsists under the title of *Chase-wax*.

it

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it may be admitted, I think, as a strong argument that he was not educated at Oxford; as Leland has supposed, without the shadow of a proof (*b*). The Biographers however, instead of weighing one of these accounts against the other, have adopted both; and tell us very gravely, that he was first at Cambridge, and afterwards removed from thence to compleat his studies at Oxford.

It were to be wished that Mr. Speght had given us the date of that Record in the Inner Temple, (which, he says, a Mr. Buckley had seen,) where “Geffrey Chaucer was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscane frier in Fleet-street (*c*).” Leland has also told

(*b*) The single circumstance, by which Leland has endeavoured to strengthen his supposition that Chaucer was educated at Oxford, is another supposition that he was born in Oxfordshire or Berkshire. The latter has been shewn above to be false.

(*c*) Though this be but a blind story, it rather inclines me to believe that Chaucer was of the Inner Temple *in the early part of his life*, before he went into the service of Edward III. The circumstance recorded is plainly a *youthful* fally. On the contrary, Leland supposes his *principal* residence in the Inns of Court to have been *after* he had *flourished* in France, *about the last years* of Richard II; which is totally incredible. Indeed Leland, through his whole account of our author, seems to have considered him as living at least twenty years later than he really did. He takes no notice of the best authenticated circumstances of Chaucer’s life in the time of Edward III; and he represents him as highly esteemed by Henry IV, and *HIS SON*, *qui de Gallis triumphavit*. Henry V was scarcely xii years of age, when Chaucer died.

us,

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us, that our author "*collegia Leguleiorum frequentavit* after his travels in France, and perhaps before." I must observe, that these travels in France rest entirely upon the authority of Leland, whose account is full of inconsistencies.

The first authentic memorial, which we have of Chaucer, is the Patent in Rymer, 41 E. III. by which that King grants to him an annuity of 20 marks, by the title of *Valettus noster* (d). He was then in the

(d) *Our Yeoman*. Mr. Speght, who omits this grant, mentions one of the same purport in the 45 E. III. in which Chaucer is styled *Valettus Hospitii*, which he translates—*Grome of the Pallace*. By this he sinks our author as much too low as another writer has raised him too high, by translating the same words—*Gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber* [Life of Ch. Urr.]. *Valet*, or *Yeoman*, was the intermediate rank between *Squier* and *Grome*. See the note on ver. 101. See also the Will of Edward Duke of York, ap. Rymer, an. 1415. where his legacies to his *menial servants* are thus arranged—a un Escuier l. s. a [un] vadlet xx s. a un garc [on . . .] & a un page vi s. viii d.

Valettus is probably a corruption of *Vassalettus*, the diminutive of *Vassallus*. Hence this title was also given (not as a name of service) to young men of the highest quality, before they were knighted.

Il ot un fiz de sa mulier,

Ki neit pas uncore chivaler,

Vallet esteit et beaus et gent.— Roman d'Ipomedon.

So that if Edward III., as Mr. Speght says, "did entitle Laurence Hastings, Lord of Aburganey,—*Valectum nostrum*," I should guess, that the said Lord was not "the King's grome, page, or servant," (as he supposes,) or his yeoman, (as Chaucer was,) but his *Ward*.

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39th year of his age. How long he had served the King in that, or any other, station, and what particular merits were rewarded by this royal bounty (e), are points equally unknown.

From

(e) I should have been glad to have met with any ground for supposing, that this mark of Royal favour was a reward of our author's poetical merits. That Chaucer had before this time distinguished himself by his poetical performances, is almost certain. I have mentioned a suspicion [n. on ver. 1920] that the *Assemblée of Foules* alludes to the Courtship of Blanche of Lancaster by John of Gaunt, who married her in 1359, the 33d year of E. III. And perhaps the *Complaint of the Blacke Knight* might be written for John of Gaunt during the same Courtship. It is still more probable that his Translation of the *Roman de la Rose* and his *Troilus* were both composed before 1367, the æra of which we are speaking. But I think, if the King had really patronized Chaucer as a Poet, we must have found some clear evidence of such a connection. If the one had been fond of verses, the other would certainly have given him some; especially as he might have exerted his genius in the praise of so illustrious a Patron without any necessity of flattering. If we consider further, that, a few years after, the King appointed him to be Comptroller of the Custom of Wool, &c. in the Port of London, with the following injunction in his Patent;—
"So that the said Geoffrey write with his own hand his rolls touching the said office, and continually reside there, and do and execute all things pertaining to the said office in his own proper person and not by his substitute,"—we shall probably be of opinion, that His Majesty was either totally insensible of our author's poetical talents; or at least had no mind to encourage him in the cultivation or exercise of them.

It

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From this time we find frequent mention of him in various public instruments. In the 46 E. III. [*ap. Rymer.*] the King appoints him Envoy (with two others) to Genoa, by the title of *Scutifer noster* (f).

It should seem that Edward, though adorned with many Royal and Heroic virtues, had not the gift of discerning and patronizing a great Poet; a gift, which, like that of genuine Poetry, (if we may believe one, who perhaps spoke feelingly upon the subject,) is only bestowed on the chosen few by the peculiar favour of heaven:

— neque enim, NISI CARUS AB ORTU
DIIS SUPERIS, poterit MAGNO favisse POETÆ.

Milton's MANSUS.

I observe however, that, notwithstanding the petrifying quality, with which these Custom-house accounts might be expected to operate upon Chaucer's genius, he probably wrote his *House of Fame* while he was in that office. I gather this from B. ii. ver. 144. where the Eagle says to him,—

For when thy labour al done is,
And hast made all thy *rekenynges*,
In stede of rest and of newe thynges
Thou goest home to thyne house anon, &c.

(f) *Our Squier*; so that in the course of these five years our author had been promoted from the rank of *Yeoman*, to that of *Squier*, attendant upon the King. *Scutifer* and *Armiger*, LAT. are synonymous terms for the French *Escuier*. The Biographers thinking, I suppose, the title of *Squier* too vulgar, have changed it into *Shield-bearer*, as if Chaucer had the special office of carrying the King's shield.

Some observations have been made upon this appointment of Chaucer, as Envoy to Genoa, in the Discourse, &c. n. 20.

In

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In the 48 E. III. he has a grant for Life of a Pitcher of wine daily [*ap. Rymer.*]; and in the same year a Grant, during pleasure, of the Office of Comptroller of the custom of Wools, &c. in the Port of London [*Ibid.*]. In the 49 E. III. the King grants to him the Wardship of Sir Edmund Staplegate's Heir [*Mss. Rymer, E. III. vol. xi. n. 12.*], for which he received 104 *l.* [*Ibid. R. II. vol. i. n. 16.*]; and in the next year some forfeited wool to the value of 71*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.* [*Life of Ch. Urr.*]. In the last year of Edward III, he was sent to France, with Sir Guichard D'Angle and Richard Stan, [or *Sturry*], to treat of a marriage between the Prince of Wales, Richard, and a daughter of the French king [*Froissart, v. i. ch. 325.*].

In the next year, 1 R. II. his annuity of 20 marks was confirmed to him, and another annuity of 20 marks was granted to him in lieu of the Pitcher of wine daily. [See the Licence to surrender these grants in the *Life of Ch. Urr.*]. It is probable too that he was confirmed in his Office of Comptroller, though the instrument has not been produced (*g*). In the 11th of R. II. he had the King's Licence to surrender his two grants of 20 marks each in favour of John

(*g*) This is probable, I think, because Chaucer, in his Testament of Love, frequently alludes to his loss of Office, as one of the greatest misfortunes brought upon him by his *meddling* in those disturbances, which happened in the city of London in the 7th of R. II. When he fled, to avoid being examined in relation to those disturbances (*as he says, Test. of L. fol. 329. b.*), he was probably superseded in his Office.

Scalby.

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Scalby. (b). In the 13th R. II. he appears to have been Clerk of the works at Westminster, &c. and in

(b) This Licence, reciting the two Grants, is printed in the Life of Ch. Urr. and the author of that life has observed, that this surrender was probably occasioned by our Author's distressed circumstances. Either he despaired of procuring payment of his pensions, or perhaps wanted to raise a sum of ready money. The same writer has extracted from the *Testament of Love* almost all that is now to be known of the history of this distress, which he ascribes very truly to Chaucer's unfortunate engagements with that party in the city of London, of which John of Northampton was at the head. What the real designs of that party were, and how a trifling City-riot, as it seems to have been, came to be treated as a rebellion, are points of great obscurity. There is good ground to believe that Northampton was connected with the Duke of Lancaster. At his trial, in August 1384, he contended, "that he ought not to be tried in the absence of his lord the Duke:" *quo verbo* (says Walsingham, p. 310.) *suscitavit suspicionem sinistram tam vulgi quam procerum contra Ducem*. He was condemned however to perpetual imprisonment; in which he remained till July 1390, when (according to the Monk of Evesham, p. 122.) *ad instantiam Ducis Lancastrie, Johannes Northampton — et socii sui nuper de Londoniis bannti, restituti sunt ad pristinas libertates*. The judgment against him was reversed in Parliament the next year, *Rot. Parl.* 14 R. II. n. 36. and he was restored to his lands, &c. the year following, *Rot. Parl.* 15 R. II. n. 33. This connexion of Northampton with the Duke of Lancaster will account for the part which Chaucer appears to have taken in this unhappy affair. He was very early attached to

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in the following year at Windsor (*i*). In the 17th R. II. the King granted to him a new Annuity of twenty pounds [*ap. Rymer.*] (*k*);—in the 21st, his to that Duke, and was at this time married to a sister of Catharine Swinford, the Duke's mistress; and it is observable, that the first mark of royal favour, which he received after his distresses, was bestowed upon him at the same time that Northampton received his pardon, and probably through the same mediation.

(*i*) See Tanner's Bib. Brit. v. CHAUCER, n. c. It may justly be doubted whether these two offices together indemnified our author for the loss of his former office in the Customs. That was probably a very lucrative one. He complains of "being berafte out of dignitie of Office, in which he made a gatheringe of worldly godes;" and in another place he speaks of himself as "once glorious in worldly welefulnesse, and having fuche godes in welthe as maken men riche." [Test. of L. fol. 326. a. b.]. But that he should ever have been possessed of "lands and revenues to the yearly value almost of a thousand pounds," (according to the tradition repeated by Mr. Speght,) is quite incredible.

(*k*) If Chaucer was ever possessed of Dunnington-castle in Berkshire, (as his Biographers suppose he was,) he must have purchased it about this time; for it appears to have been in the possession of Sir Richard Abberbury in the 16th year of R. II. *Monast. Ang.* ii. 474. We have no proof of any such purchase, and the situation of his affairs makes it highly improbable. The tradition, which Mr. Evelyn mentions in his *Sylva*, of an oak in Dunnington park called *Chaucer's oak*, may be sufficiently accounted for without supposing that it was planted by Chaucer himself, as the Castle was undoubtedly in the hands of Thomas Chaucer for many years.

Protection

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Protection for two years [*Ibid.*] ;—and in the 22d, a pipe of wine annually [*Ibid.*]. In the next year, the 1st H. IV. his two grants, of the Annuity of 20 *l.* and of the Pipe of wine, were confirmed to him [Mss. Rymer, H. IV. vol. i. n. 27.], and at the same time, he had an additional grant of an Annuity of 40 Marks [*Ibid.* n. 15.]. He died, according to the inscription on his tomb-stone, in the beginning of the 2 H. IV. on the 25th of October, 1400.

These, I think, are the principal facts in Chaucer's life, which are attested by authentic evidences (*l*). We learn

(*l*) It appears further from the *Exitus, Pasch.* 4 R. II. [Mss. Rymer, R. II. vol. ii. n. 3.] that Chaucer, on the 24 May, 1381, received at the Exchequer a half-year's payment of his own two annuities of 20 marks each, and also a half-year's payment of an annuity of 10 marks, granted by E. III. and confirmed by R. II. to his wife Philippa, *nuper uni domicellarum Philippæ, nuper Regina Angliæ.* The title given to her of *domicella* proves that she was unmarried at the time of her being in the Queen's service. There is a Patent in Rymer, 43 E. III. by which the King, about four months after Queen Philippa's death, grants annuities to nine of her *Domicellæ*, viz. to four of them 10 marks, to two 5 pounds, and to three 5 marks. One of them is called *Philippa Pykard*, and might very well be supposed to be the lady whom Chaucer afterwards married, if it were not for two objections, 1. that the annuity granted to her is only 5 pounds, whereas Chaucer's wife appears by this record to have had one of 10 marks; and 2. that the Historians, though they own themselves totally ignorant of the Christian name of Chaucer's wife, are all agreed that her surname was *Rouet*, the same with that of her father

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learn from himself, in his *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, that he had a son, called *Lewis*, who was ten years of age in 1391. It is the only circumstance, as I recollect, relating to his family, of which he has informed us. A few other historical particulars relating to himself,

father and eldest sister, Catharine Swynford. The first objection might be got over by supposing that her annuity, though at first only 5 pounds, was encreased (perhaps upon her marriage with Chaucer) to 10 marks. As to the other point, it is not impossible that the father, and the eldest sister, who was his *heirefs* [See Pat. 13 H. IV. p. 1. m. 35. *ap. Rymer.*], might bear the name of *de Rouet*, (or *de Roelt*, as it is in the Pat. 13 H. IV. just quoted,) from some estate in their possession, and yet the younger Sister might be called by the family-name of *Pykard*.

If the records of payments at the Exchequer for the eleven years preceding 1381 are still in being, they may enable us to clear up these doubts, and also, perhaps, to ascertain very nearly the time of Chaucer's marriage, as they will probably shew when he began to receive his wife's annuity. If this last point were ascertained, we should know better what to think of the relation of Thomas Chaucer to our author. Mr. Speght informs us, "that some held opinion, that Thomas C. was not the sonne of Geoffrey," and there are certainly many circumstances which might incline us to that opinion. I was in hopes of meeting with some light upon this subject in a Poem which Lydgate is said to have written, entitled, "A Complaint upon the departure of Thomas Chaucer into France, upon the Kynges Ambassate." A Poem, with this title, is extant in Ms. *Harl.* 367. 33. in the hand-writing of J. Stowe, but upon inspection I found it to be a mere love-ballad, without the least imaginable reference to Thomas Chaucer.

c

which

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which may be collected from his writings, have been taken notice of already; and perhaps a more attentive examination of his works might furnish a few more. We must be cautious however, in such an examination, of supposing allusions which Chaucer never intended, or of arguing from pieces which he never wrote, as if they were his. We must not infer from his repeated commendations of the Dayse-flower, that he was specially favoured by Margaret, Countess of Pembroke (m); and still less should we set him down as a
follower

(m) I can find no other foundation for this notion. Mr. Speght, who first started it, says, that "it may appeare in divers treatises by him written: as in the *Prologue of the Legend of good women* under the name of the Dayse; and likewise in a *Ballad*, beginning, *In the season of Fevier.*" The *Ballad* is among the additions made by John Stowe to Chaucer's works in 1561, and, like the greatest part of those additions, is of *very dubious authority*, to use the gentlest terms. But supposing it genuine, there is nothing in it to make us believe that it had any reference to the Countess of Pembroke. That its commendations of the Dayse ought not to weigh with us is very plain from the other piece cited by Mr. Speght: for the *Legende of good women*, in which he imagines "the Lady Margaret to be honoured under the name of the Dayse," was certainly not written till at least twelve years after that Lady's death. [See the Discourse, &c. n. 3. for the date of the *Legende*. The Countess *Margaret* must have died not later than 1370, as the Earl's son, by his second wife *Anne*, was about nineteen years of age, when he was killed in a tournament in 1391, Hollinshed, p. 471.] It is possible that *le dit de la fleur de lis et de la Marguerite* by Guillaume de Machaut [Acad.

APPENDIX TO THE PREFACE. XXXV

follower of Alain Chartier (*n*), because his Editors have
falsely

des Inf. t. xx. p. 381.], and the *Dittie de la flour de la Margherite* by Froissart [Ibid. t. x. p. 669.], (neither of which had the least relation to the Countess of Pembroke,) might furnish us with the true key to those mystical compliments, which our poet has paid to the Dayie-flower.

(*n*) Leland was the first author of this story, which is totally inconsistent with Chronology. The time of Alain's birth has not been settled with precision; but he was certainly living near 40 years after Chaucer's death; which makes it morally impossible that the latter should have *followed* him, in his attempts to polish his native language. Instead therefore of supposing from the translation of *La belle dame sans merci* that Chaucer imitated Alain Chartier, we should rather conclude, that he was not the author of that translation; which indeed in Ms. Harl. 372. is expressly attributed to a *Sir Richard Ros*.

I will just take notice of another opinion, (which has been propagated upon as little foundation,) that Chaucer imitated the Provençal poets. Mr. Rymer, who, I believe, first made the discovery, speaks only of his having borrowed from *their language* [View of Trag. p. 78.], but Mr. Dryden found out, that he composed *after their manner*, particularly his tale of *the Flower and the Leaf*. [Pref. to Fables.]. Mr. Warton also thinks, that *the House of Fame* "was originally a Provencial composition." [Hist. of Eng. Po. p. 389. 458.]

How far Chaucer's *language* was borrowed, has been considered already, in the Essay, &c. Part i. I will only add here, that I have not observed in any of his writings a single phrase or word, which has the least appearance of having been fetched by him from the South of the Loire. With respect to the *manner* and *matter* of his compositions,

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falsely ascribed to him a translation of one of Alain's poems.

till some clear instance of imitation be produced, I shall be slow to believe that in either he ever copied the poets of Provence, with whose works, I apprehend, he had very little, if any, acquaintance.

ERRATA.

ERRATA.

Pag.	Ver.	VOL. I.
8.	194.	r. <i>of</i>
12.	296.	r. Twenty bokes clothed in.
16.	383.	r. tart and.
28.	699.	r. Thatte Seint Peter.
31.	758.	r. And of manhood him lacked righte naught.
40.	999.	<i>Dele eke.</i>
57.	1441.	<i>for nere, r. ner.</i>
60.	1512.	<i>for O May, r. Maye.</i>
66.	1678.	r. <i>darweth.</i>
70.	1769.	r. <i>thoughte.</i>
71.	1801.	r. Who maye ben a fool, but if he love ?
76.	1933.	r. Festes, instrumentes, and c.
77.	1952.	<i>for listeth, r. liste.</i>
86.	2182.	<i>for her, r. hir.</i>
114.	2930.	r. Nimphes, Faunes, and.
153.	3921.	<i>for stent, r. stont.</i>
172.	4405.	r. rote alle.
181.	4629.	<i>for him, r. hem.</i>
189.	4824.	r. Butte this Scorpion.
190.	4829.	r. with alle joye.
	4834.	r. Soudanneffe.
192.	4877.	r. That only worthy were for.
197.	5004.	<i>for wile, r. while.</i>
268.	6778.	r. <i>besinesse.</i>
	6788.	a full point after <i>repreue.</i>
274.	6937.	r. <i>retenue.</i>

Pag.	Ver.	VOL. II.
65.	9409.	r. wastour.
66.	9434.	a comma after <i>man.</i>
89.	10028.	r. That no wight might him see neyther yhere.
94.	10168.	r. were riche.
107.	10501.	<i>for him, r. hem.</i>
112.	10628.	a comma after <i>fire.</i>
148.	11562.	<i>for frostes r. froste.</i>
	11563.	<i>for han r. hath.</i>
193.	12706.	r. No lenger than after <i>dethe.</i>

ERRATA.

VOL. III.

Pag.	Ver.
13.	14200 r. Goth, bringeth forthe the v.
27.	14520. r. Thatte his peines.
32.	14646. r. fore him.
58.	15304. for cetees, r. certes.
77.	15783. for bare, r. here.
84.	15932. r. Woldest thou that I reneye innocence
129.	17076. r. disport.
140.	17378. r. for.
320. l. 16.	r. treatise.

VOL. IV.

Pag.	
43. l. 14.	after other, insert indeclinable.
55. l. 9.	for ppencean r. ppencean.
61. l. 16.	r. Map l'estreß.
95. l. 19.	r. perce'd.
106. l. 16.	r. Navarre.
108. l. 12.	r. original.
144. l. 4.	r. wbatower.
147. l. 20.	r. does.
161. l. penult.	Dele "Drayton and." See pag. 269. n.*
203. l. 24 and 25,	for and, r. et.
224. l. 16.	r. bellatrici.
238. l. 16.	Dele the words in the Parenthesis.
256. l. 23.	for one and thirty, r. nine and twenty.
289. l. 3.	after J. insert W.
294. l. 16.	r. breibren.

Corrected A.B.

CON-

THE
CANTERBURY TALES.

THE PROLOGUE.

WHANNE that April with his shoures fote
The droughte of March hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veine in swiche licour,
Of whiche vertue engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eke with his fote brethe
Enspired hath in every holt and hethe
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
And smale foules maken melodie,
That slepen alle night with open eye, 10
So priketh hem nature in hir corages;
Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken strange strondes,
To serve halwes couthe in fondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Englelond, to Canterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martyr for to seke,
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

Befelle, that, in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay, 20

Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
 To Canterbury with devoute corage,
 At night was come into that hostelrye
 Wel nine and twenty in a compaignie
 Of fondry folk, by aventure yfalle
 In felawship, and pilgrimes were they alle,
 That toward Canterbury wolden ride.
 The chambres and the stables weren wide,
 And wel we weren esed atte beste.

And shortly, whan the sonne was gon to restre, 30
 So hadde I spoken with hem everich on,
 That I was of hir felawship anon,
 And made forword erly for to rise,
 To take oure way ther as I you devise.

But natheles, while I have time and space,
 Or that I forther in this tale pace,
 Me thinketh it accordant to reson,
 To tellen you alle the condition
 Of eche of hem, so as it semed me,
 And whiche they weren, and of what degre; 40
 And eke in what araie that they were inne:
 And at a knight than wol I firste beginne.

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
 That fro the time that he firste began
 To riden out, he loved chevalrie,

· Trouthe

THE PROLOGUE.

3

Trouthe and honour, fredom and curtesie.
 Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
 And therto hadde he ridden, no man ferre,
 As wel in Cristendom as in Hethenesse,
 And ever honoured for his worthinesse.

50

At Alifandre he was whan it was wonne.
 Ful often time he hadde the bord begonne
 Aboven alle nations in Pruce.

In Lettowe hadde he reysed and in Ruce,
 No cristen man so ofte of his degre.

In Gernade at the siege eke hadde he be
 Of Algesir, and ridden in Belmarie.

At Leyes was he, and at Satalie,

Whan they were wonne ; and in the Grete see

At many a noble armee hadde he be.

60

At mortal batailles hadde he ben fiftene,

And foughten for our faith at Tramissene

In listes thries, and ay slain his fo.

This ilke worthy knight hadde ben also

Somtime with the lord of Palatie,

Agen another hethen in Turkie :

And evermore he hadde a fovereine pris.

And though that he was worthy he was wise,

And of his port as meke as is a mayde.

He never yet no vilanie ne sayde

70

In alle his lif, unto no manere wight.

B 2

He

THE PROLOGUE.

He was a véray parfit gentil knight.

But for to tellen you of his araie,
His hors was good, but he ne was not gaie.
Of fustian he wered a gipon,
Alle besmotred with his habergeon,
For he was late ycome fro his viage,
And wente for to don his pilgrimage.

WITH him ther was his sone a yonge SQUIER,
A lover, and a lusty bacheler, 80
With lockes crull as they were laide in presse.
Of twenty yere of age he was I gesse.
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
And wonderly deliver, and grete of strengthe.
And he hadde be somtime in chevachie,
In Flaundres, in Artois, and in Picardie,
And borne him wel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his ladies grace.

Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
Alle ful of freshe floures, white and rede. 90
Singing he was, or floyting alle the day,
He was as freshe, as is the moneth of May.
Short was his goune, with fleves long and wide.
Wel coude he fitte on hors, and fayre ride.
He coude songes make, and wel endite,
Juste and eke dance, and wel pourtraic and write.

So

THE PROLOGUE.

5

So hote he loved, that by nightertale
He flep no more than doth the nightingale.

Curteis he was, lowly, and servisable,
And carf before his fader at the table. 100

A YEMAN hadde he, and servantes no mo
At that time, for him luste to ride so;
And he was cladde in cote and hode of grene.
A shefe of peacock arwes bright and kene
Under his belt he bare ful thriftily.
Wel coude he dresse his takel yemanly:
His arwes drouped not with fetheres lowe.
And in his hond he bare a mighty bowe.

A not-hed hadde he, with a broune visage.
Of wood-craft coude he wel alle the usage. 110
Upon his arme he bare a gaie bracer,
And by his side a fwerd and a bokeler,
And on that other side a gaie daggere,
Harneised wel, and sharpe as point of spere:
A Cristofre on his brest of silver shene.
An horne he bare, the baudrik was of grene.
A forster was he sothely as I gcffe.

THER was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hire smiling was ful simple and coy;
Hire gretest othe n'as but by Seint Eloy; 120

B 3

And

And she was cleped madame Eglentine.
 Ful wel she fange the service devine,
 Entuned in hire nose ful swetely;
 And Frenche she spake ful fayre and fetisly,
 After the scole of Stratford atte bowe,
 For Frenche of Paris was to hire unknowe.
 At mete was she wel ytaughte withalle;
 She lette no morsel from hire lippes falle,
 Ne wette hire fingres in hire fauce depe.
 Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe, 130
 Thatte no drope ne fell upon hire brest.
 In curtesie was sette ful moche hire lest.
 Hire over lippe wiped she so clene,
 That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene
 Of grese, whan she dronken hadde hire draught.
 Ful semely after hire mete she raught.
 And fikerly she was of grete disport,
 And ful plesant, and amiable of port,
 And peined hire to contrefeten chere
 Of court, and ben estatelich of manere, 140
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.
 But for to speken of hire conscience,
 She was so charitable and so pitous,
 She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous
 Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.
 Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde

With

THE PROLOGUE.

7

With rosted flesh, and milk, and wastel brede.
But fore wept she if on of hem were dede,
Or if men smote it with a yerde smert :
And all was conscience and tendre herte. 150

Ful semely hire wimple ypinched was;
Hire nose tretis; hire eyen grey as glas;
Hire mouth ful smale, and therto soft and red;
But fikerly she hadde a fayre forehed.
It was almost a spanne brode I trowe;
For hardily she was not undergrowe.

Ful fetise was hire cloke, as I was ware.
Of smale corall aboute hire arm she bare
A pair of bedes, gauded all with grene;
And theron heng a broche of gold ful shene, 160
On whiche was first ywriten a crowned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia*,

Another NONNE also with hire hadde she,
That was hire chapelleine, and PREESTES thre.

A MONK ther was, a fayre for the maistrie,
An out-rider, that loved venerie;
A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
Ful many a deinte hors hadde he in stable:
And whan he rode, men mighte his bridel here
Gingeling in a whistling wind as clere, 170
And eke as loude, as doth the chapell belle,

Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.

The reule of seint Maure and of seint Beneit,

Because that it was olde and somdele streit,

This ilke monk lette olde thinges pace,

And held after the newe world the trace.

He yave not of the text a pulled hen,

That faith, that hunters ben not holy men ;

Ne that a monk, whan he is rekkeles,

Is like to a fish that is waterles ; 180

This is to say, a monk out of his cloistre.

This ilke text held he not worth an oistre.

And I say his opinion was good.

What shulde he studie, and make himselfen wood,

Upon a book in cloistre alway to pore,

Or fwinken with his hondes, and laboure,

As Austin bit ? how shal the world be served ?

Let Austin have his fwink to him reserved.

Therefore he was a prickasoure a right :

Greihoundes he hadde as swift as foul of flight : 190

Of pricking and of hunting for the hare

Was all his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.

I saw his fleves purfiled at the hond

With gris, and that the finest of the lond,

And for to fasten his hood under his chinne,

He hadde of gold ywrought a curious pinne :

A love-knotte in the greter ende ther was,

His hed was balled, and shone as any glas,

And

THE PROLOGUE.

9

And eke his face, as it hadde ben anoint.
 He was a lord ful fat and in good point. 200
 His eyen stepe, and rolling in his hed,
 That stemed as a forneis of a led.
 His bootes souple, his hors in gret estat,
 Now certainly he was a fayre prelat.
 He was not pale as a forpined gost.
 A fat swan loved he best of any rost.
 His palfrey was as broune as is a bery.

A FRERE ther was, a wanton and a mery,
 A Limitour, a ful solempne man.
 In all the ordres foure is non that can 210
 So moche of daliance and fayre langage.
 He hadde ymade ful many a mariage
 Of yonge wimmen, at his owen cost.
 Until his ordre he was a noble post.
 Ful wel beloved, and familier was he
 With frankleins over all in his contree,
 And eke with worthy wimmen of the toun :
 For he had power of confession,
 As saide himselfe, more than a curat,
 For of his ordre he was licenciat. 220
 Ful swetely herde he confession,
 And plesant was his absolution.
 He was an esy man to give penance,

Ther

Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance :
 For unto a poure ordre for to give
 Is signe that a man is wel yshrive.
 For if he gave, he dorste make avant,
 He wiste that a man was repentant.
 For many a man so hard is of his herte,
 He may not wepe although him fore smerte.
 Therefore in stede of weping and praieres,
 Men mote give silver to the poure freres,

239

His tippet was ay farfed ful of knives,
 And pinnes, for to given fayre wives.
 And certainly he hadde a mery note.
 Wel coude he finge and plaien on a rote,
 Of yeddinges he bare utterly the pris,
 His nekke was white as the flour de lis.
 Therto he strong was as a champioun,
 And knew wel the tavernes in every toun,
 And every hosteler and gay tapstere,
 Better than a lazar or a beggere,
 For unto swiche a worthy man as he
 Accordeth nought, as by his faculte,
 To haven with fike lazars acquaintance.
 It is not honest, it may not avance,
 As for to delen with no swiche pouraille,
 But all with riche, and sellers of vitaille.
 And over all, ther as profit shuld arise,

249

Curteis

THE PROLOGUE.

11

Curteis he was, and lowly of servise. 250

Ther n'as no man no wher so vertuous.

He was the beste begger in all his hous :

And gave a certaine ferme for the grant,

Non of his bretheren came in his haunt.

For though a widewe hadde but a shoo,

(So plesant was his *In principio*)

Yet wold he have a ferthing or he went.

His pourchas was wel better than his rent.

And rage he coude as it hadde ben a whelp,

In lovedayes, ther coude he mochel help. 260

For ther was he nat like a cloisterere,

With thredbare cope, as is a poure scolere,

But he was like a maister or a pope.

Of double worsted was his femicope,

That round was as a belle out of the presse.

Somwhat he lisped for his wantonneffe,

To make his English swete upon his tonge ;

And in his harping, whan that he hadde songe,

His eyen twinkeled in his hed aright,

As don the sterres in a frosty night. 270

This worthy limitour was cleped Huberd.

A MERCHANT was ther with a forked berd,

In mottelee, and highe on hors he sat,

And on his hed a Flaundrish bever hat.

His

THE PROLOGUE.

His bootes clapsed fayre and fetisfly.
 His resons spake he ful solempnely,
 Souning alway the encrese of his winning.
 He wold the see were kept for any thing
 Betwixen Middelburgh and Orewell.
 Wel coud he in eschanges sheldes selle. 280
 This worthy man ful wel his wit besette;
 Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,
 So stedefastly didde he his governance,
 With his bargeines, and with his chevifance.
 Forsothe he was a worthy man withalle,
 But soth to sayn, I n'ot how men him calle.

A CLERK ther was of Oxenforde also,
 That unto logike hadde long ygo.
 As lene was his hors as is a rake,
 And he was not right fat, I undertake; 290
 But loked holwe, and therto soberly.
 Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
 For he hadde gotten him yet no benefice,
 Ne was nought worldly to have an office.
 For him was lever han at his beddes hed
 A twenty bokes, cladde in blake or red,
 Of Aristotle, and his philosophie,
 Than robes riche, or fidel, or fautrie.
 But all be that he was a philosophre,

clothed
 ^

Yet

THE PROLOGUE.

13

Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre, 300
 But all that he might of his frendes hente,
 On bokes and on lerning he it spente,
 And befily gan for the foules praie
 Of hem, that yave him wherwith to scolaie.
 Of studie toke he moste cure and hede.
 Not a word spake he more than was nede;
 And that was said in forme and reverence,
 And short and quike, and ful of high sentence.
 Souning in moral vertue was his speche,
 And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche. 310

A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE ware and wise,
 That often hadde yben at the paruis,
 Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
 Discrete he was, and of gret reverence:
 He femed swiche, his wordes were so wise.
 Justice he was ful often in assise,
 By patent, and by pleine commissioun;
 For his science, and for his high renoun,
 Of fees and robes had he many on.
 So grete a pourchafour was no wher non. 320
 All was fee simple to him in effect,
 His pourchasing might not ben in suspect.
 No wher so besy a man as he ther n'as,
 And yet he femed besier than he was.

In

In termes hadde he cas and domes alle,
 That fro the time of king Will. weren falle.
 Therto he coude endite, and make a thing,
 Ther coude no wight pinche at his writing.
 And every statute coude he plaine by rote.
 He rode but homely in a medlee cote, 330
 Girt with a feint of filk, with barres smale;
 Of his array tell I no lenger tale.

A FRANKLEIN was in this compaignie :
 White was his berd, as is the dayesie.
 Of his complexion he was sanguin.
 Wel loved he by the morwe a fop in win.
 To liven in delit was ever his wone,
 For he was Epicures owen sone,
 That held opinion, that plein delit
 Was veraily felicite parfite. 340
 An housholder, and that a grete was he;
 Seint Julian he was in his contree.
 His brede, his ale, was alway after on ;
 A better envyned man was no wher non.
 Withouten bake mete never was his hous,
 Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,
 It snwed in his hous of mete and drinke,
 Of alle deintees that men coud of thinke.
 After the fondry sasons of the yere,

So

THE PROLOGUE.

15

So changed he his mete and his sroupere. 350

Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewes,

And many a breme, and many a luce in stewes.

Who was his coke, but if his fauce were

Poynt and sharpe, and redy all his gere.

His table dormant in his halle alway

Stode redy covered alle the longe day.

At sessions ther was he lord and fire.

Ful often time he was knight of the shire.

An anelace and a gipciere all of filk,

Heng at his girdel, white as morwe milk. 360

A shereve hadde he ben, and a countour.

Was no wher swiche a worthy vavasour.

AN HABERDASHER, and a CARPENTER,

A WEBBE, a DEYER, and a TAPISER,

Were alle yclothed in o livere,

Of a solempne and grete fraternite.

Ful freshe and newe hir gere ypyked was.

Hir knives were ychaped not with bras,

But all with silver, wrought ful clene and wel,

Hir girdeles and hir pouches every del. 370

Wel semed eche of hem a fayre burgeis,

To sitten in a gild halle, on the deis.

Everich for the wisdom that he can,

Was shapelich for to ben an alderman.

For

For catel hadden they ynough and rent,
 And eke hir wives wolde it wel assent :
 And elles certainly they were to blame.
 It is ful fayre to ben ycleped madame,
 And for to gon to vigiles all before,
 And have a mantel reallich ybore. 380

tart and

A COKE they hadden with hem for the nones,
 To boile the chickenes and the marie bones,
 And poudre marchant, and tart galingale.
 Wel coude he knowe a draught of London ale.
 He coude roste, and sethe, and broile, and frie,
 Maken mortrewes, and wel bake a pie.
 But gret harm was it, as it thoughte me,
 That on his shinne a mormal hadde he.
 For blanc manger that made he with the best.

A SHIPMAN was ther, woned fer by West : 390
 For ought I wote, he was of Dertemouth.
 He rode upon a rouncie, as he couthe,
 All in a goun of falding to the knee.
 A dagger hanging by a las hadde hee
 About his nekke under his arm adoun.
 The hote sommer hadde made his hewe al broun.
 And certainly he was a good felaw.
 Ful many a draught of win he hadde draw

From

THE PROLOGUE. 17

From Burdeux ward, while that the chapmen flepe.
 Of nice conscience toke he no kepe. 400
 If that he faught, and hadde the higher hand,
 By water he sent hem home to every land.
 But of his craft to reken wel his tides,
 His strems and his strandes him besides,
 His herberwe, his mone, and his lodemanage,
 Ther was non swiche, from Hull unto Cartage.
 Hardy he was, and wise, I undertake :
 With many a tempest hadde his berd be shake.
 He knew wel alle the havens, as they were,
 Fro Gotland, to the Cape de finistere, 410
 And every creke in Bretagne and in Spaine :
 His barge ycleped was the Magdelaine.

WITH us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISIKE,
 In all this world ne was ther non him like
 To speke of phisike, and of surgerie :
 For he was grounded in astronomie.
 He kept his patient a ful gret del
 In houres by his magike naturel.
 Wel coude he fortunen the ascendent
 Of his images for his patient. 420

He knew the cause of every maladie,
 Were it of cold, or hote, or moist, or drie,
 And wher engendred, and of what humour,

He was a veray parfite practifour.
 The caufe yknowe, and of his harm the rote,
 Anon he gave to the fike man his bote.
 Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
 To fend him dragges, and his lettuaries,
 For eche of hem made other for to winne :
 Hir frendfhip n'as not newe to beginne. 430
 Wel knew he the old Esculapius,
 And Dioscorides, and eke Rufus ;
 Old Hippocras, Hali, and Gallien ;
 Serapion, Rafis, and Avicen ;
 Averrois, Damascene, and Constantin ;
 Bernard and Gatifden, and Gilbertin.
 Of his diete mefurable was he,
 For it was of no superfluitee,
 But of gret nourifhing, and digeftible.
 His studie was but litel on the Bible. 440
 In fanguin and in perfe he clad was alle
 Lined with taffata, and with fendalle.
 And yet he was but esy of difpence :
 He kepte that he wan in the pestilence.
 For gold in phifike is a cordial ;
 Therfore he loved gold in fpecial.

A good WIF was ther OF befide BATHE,
 But fhe was fom del defe, and that was fcathe.

THE PROLOGUE.

19

Of cloth making she hadde swiche an haunt,
 She passed hem of Ipres, and of Gaunt. 450
 In all the parish wif ne was ther non,
 That to the offring before hire shulde gon,
 And if ther did, certain so wroth was she,
 That she was out of alle charitee.
 Hire coverchiefs weren ful fine of ground;
 I dorste swere, they weyeden a pound;
 That on the Sunday were upon hire hede.
 Hire hosen weren of fine scarlet rede,
 Ful streite yteyed, and shoon ful moist and newe.
 Bold was hire face, and fayre and rede of hew. 460
 She was a worthy woman all hire live,
 Houfbondes at the chirche dore had she had five,
 Withouten other compaignie in youthe.
 But therof nedeth not to speke as nouthe.
 And thries hadde she ben at Jerusaleme.
 She hadde passed many a strange streme.
 At Rome she hadde ben, and at Boloine,
 In Galice at Seint James, and at Coloine.
 She coude moche of wandring by the way.
 Gat-tothed was she, sothly for to say. 470
 Upon an ambler esily she sat,
 Ywimpled wel, and on hire hede an hat,
 As brode as is a bokeler, or a targe.
 A fote mantel about hire hippes large,

C 2

And

And on hire fete a pair of sporres sharpe.
 In felawship wel coude she laughe and carpe-
 Of remedies of love she knew parchance,
 For of that arte she coude the olde dance.

A good man ther was of religioun,
 That was a poure PERSONE of a toun : 480
 But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
 That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche.
 His parishens devoutly wolde he teche.
 Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
 And in adversite ful patient :
 And swiche he was ypreved often fithes.
 Ful loth were him to cursen for his tithes,
 But rather wolde he yeven out of doute,
 Unto his poure parishens aboute, 490
 Of his offring, and eke of his substaunce.
 He coude in litel thing have suffisaunce.
 Wide was his parish, and houses fer asonder,
 But he ne left nought for no rain ne thonder,
 In sikeneffe and in mischief to visite
 The ferrest in his parish, moche and lite,
 Upon his fete, and in his hand a staf.
 This noble ensample to his shepe he yaf,
 That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.

Out

THE PROLOGUE.

21

Out of the gospel he the wordes caught, 500
 And this figure he added yet therto,
 That if gold ruste, what shuld iren do?
 For if a preeft be foule, on whom we trust,
 No wonder is a lewed man to rust:
 And shame it is, if that a preeft take kepe,
 To see a shitten shepherd, and clene shepe:
 Wel ought a preeft ensample for to yeve,
 By his cleneneffe, how his shepe shulde live.

He sette not his benefice to hire,
 And lette his shepe acombred in the mire, 510
 And ran unto London, unto Seint Poules,
 To seken him a chanterie for foules,
 Or with a brotherhede to be withold:
 But dwelt at home, and kepte wel his fold,
 So that the wolf ne made it not miscarie.
 He was a shepherd, and no mercenarie.
 And though he holy were, and vertuous,
 He was to sinful men not dispitous,
 Ne of his speche dangerous ne digne,
 But in his teching discrete and benigne. 520
 To drawen folk to heven, with faireneffe,
 By good ensample, was his besineffe:
 But it were any persone obstinat.
 What so he were of highe, or low estat,
 Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones.

A better preest I trowe that no wher non is.
 He waited after no pompe ne reverence,
 Ne maked him no spiced conscience,
 But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
 He taught, but first he folwed it himselve. 530

WITH him ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,
 That hadde ylaide of dong ful many a fother.
 A trewe swinker, and a good was he,
 Living in pees, and parfite charitee.
 God loved he beste with alle his herte
 At alle times, were it gain or smerte,
 And than his neighebour right as himselve.
 He wolde thresh, and therto dike, and delve,
 For Cristes sake, for every poure wight,
 Withouten hire, if it lay in his might. 540

His tithes paied he ful fayre and wel
 Both of his propre fwinke, and his catel.
 In a tabard he rode upon a mere.

Ther was also a reve, and a millere,
 A sompnour, and a pardoner also,
 A manciple, and myself, ther n'ere no mo.

THE MILLER was a stout carl for the nones,
 Ful bigge he was of braun, and eke of bones ;
 That

THE PROLOGUE.

23

That proved wel, for over all ther he came,
 At wraftling he wold bere away the ram. 550
 He was short shuldered brode, a thikke gnarre,
 Ther n'as no dore, that he n'olde heve of barre,
 Or breke it at a renning with his hede.
 His berd as any sowe or fox was rede,
 And therto brode, as though it were a spade.
 Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
 A wert, and theron stode a tufte of heres,
 Rede as the bristles of a fowes eres.
 His nose-thirles blacke were and wide.
 A swerd and bokeler bare he by his side. 560
 His mouth as wide was as a forneis.
 He was a jangler, and a goliardeis,
 And that was most of sinne, and harlotries.
 Wel coude he stelen corne, and tollen thries.
 And yet he had a thomb of gold parde.
 A white cote and a blew hode wered he.
 A baggepipe wel coude he blowe and foune,
 And therwithall he brought us out of toun.

A gentil MANCIPLE was ther of a temple,
 Of which achatours mighten take ensemple 570
 For to ben wise in bying of vitaille.
 For whether that he paide, or toke by taille,
 Algate he waited so in his achate,

C 4

Thar

That he was ay before in good estate.
 Now is not that of God a ful fayre grace,
 That swiche a lewed mannes wit shal pace
 The wisdom of an hepe of lered men?

Of maisters had he mo than thries ten,
 That were of lawe expert and curious :
 Of which ther was a dosein in that hous, 580
 Worthy to ben stewardes of rent and lond
 Of any lord that is in Englelond,
 To maken him live by his propre good,
 In honour depteles, but if he were wood,
 Or live as scarfly, as him list desire ;
 And able for to helpen all a shire
 In any cas that mighte fallen or happe ;
 And yet this manciple sette hir aller cappe.

THE REVE was a flendre colerike man,
 His berd was shave as neighe as ever he can. 590
 His here was by his eres round yshorne.
 His top was docked like a preeft beforne,
 Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,
 Ylike a staff, ther was no calf ysene,
 Wel coude he kepe a garner and a binne :
 Ther was non auditour coude on him winne,
 Wel wiste he by the drought, and by the rain,
 The yelding of his feed, and of his grain.

His

THE PROLOGUE.

25

His lordes shepe, his nete, and his deirie,
 His swine, his hors, his store, and his pultrie, 600
 Were holly in this reves governing,
 And by his covenant yave he rekening,
 Sin that his lord was twenty yere of age;
 Ther coude no man bring him in arerage.
 Ther n'as baillif, ne herde, ne other hine,
 That he ne knew his sleight and his covine:
 They were adradde of him, as of the deth.
 His wonning was ful fayre upon an heth,
 With grene trees yshadewed was his place.
 He coude better than his lord pourchace. 610
 Ful riche he was ystored privily.
 His lord wel coude he plesen subtilly,
 To yeve and lene him of his owen good,
 And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
 In youthe he lerned hadde a good mistere.
 He was a wel good wright, a carpentere.
 This reve fate upon a right good stot,
 That was all pomelee grey, and highte Scot.
 A long furcote of perse upon he hade,
 And by his fide he bare a rusty blade. 620
 Of Norfolk was this reve, of which I tell,
 Beside a toun, men clepen Baldefswell.
 Tucked he was, as is a frere aboute,
 And ever he rode the hindereft of the route.

A SOMP-

A SOMPNOUR was ther with us in that place,
 That hadde a fire-red cherubennes face,
 For fausefleme he was, with eyen narwe.
 As hote he was, and likerous as a sparwe,
 With scalled browes blake, and pilled berd :
 Of his visage children were fore aferd. 630
 Ther n'as quiksilver, litarge, ne brimston,
 Boras, ceruse, ne oile of tartre non,
 Ne oinement that wolde clense or bite,
 That him might helpen of his whelkes white,
 Ne of the knobbes sitting on his chekes.
 Wel loved he garlike, onions, and lekes,
 And for to drinke strong win as rede as blood.
 Than wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.
 And whan that he wel dronken had the win,
 Than wold he speken no word but Latin. 640
 A fewe termes coude he, two or three,
 That he had lerned out of som decree ;
 No wonder is, he herd it all the day.
 And eke ye knowen wel, how that a jay
 Can clepen watte, as wel as can the pope.
 But who so wolde in other thing him grope,
 Than hadde he spent all his philosophie,
 Ay, *Questio quid juris*, wolde he crie.
 He was a gentil harlot and a kind ;
 A better felaw shulde a man not find. 650

He

He wolde suffre for a quart of wine,
 A good felaw to have his concubine
 A twelve month, and excuse him at the full.
 Ful prively a finch eke coude he pull.
 And if he found o where a good felawe,
 He wolde techen him to have non awe
 In swiche a cas of the archedekenes curse;
 But if a mannes soule were in his purse;
 For in his purse he shulde ypunished be.
 Purse is the archedekens helle, said he. 660
 But wel I wote, he lied right in dede:
 Of cursing ought eche gilty man him drede.
 For curse wol fle right as assoiling saveth,
 And also ware him of a *significavit*.

In danger hadde he at his owen gife
 The yonge girles of the diocise,
 And knew hir conseil, and was of hir rede.
 A gerlond hadde he sette upon his hede,
 As gret as it were for an alestake:
 A bokeler hadde he made him of a cake. 670

WITH him ther rode a gentil PARDONERE
 Of Rouncevall, his frend and his compere,
 That streit was comen from the court of Rome.
 Ful loude he sang, Come hither, love, to me.
 This sompnour bare to him a stiff burdoun,

Was

Was never trompe of half so gret a foun.
 This pardoner had here as yelwe as wax,
 But smoth it heng, as doth a strike of flax :
 By unces heng his lokkes that he hadde,
 And therwith he his shulders overspradde. 680
 Ful thinne it lay, by culpons on and on,
 But hode for jolite, ne wered he non,
 For it was trussed up in his wallet.
 Him thought he rode al of the newe get,
 Dishevele, fauf his cappe, he rode all bare.
 Swiche glaring eyen hadde he, as an hare.
 A vernicle hadde he sewed upon his cappe.
 His wallet lay beforne him in his lappe,
 Bret-ful of pardon come from Rome al hote.
 A vois he hadde, as finale as hath a gote. 690
 No berd hadde he, ne never non shulde have,
 As smothe it was as it were newe shave ;
 I trowe he were a gelding or a mare.
 But of his craft, fro Berwike unto Ware,
 Ne was ther swiche an other pardonere.
 For in his male he hadde a pilwebere,
 Which, as he saide, was oure ladies veil :
 He saide, he hadde a gobbet of the feyl
 Whiche that seint Peter had, whan that he went
 Upon the see, till Jesu Crist him hent. 700
 He had a crois of laton ful of stones,

And

And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
 But with these relikes, whanne that he fond
 A poure persone dwelling up on lond,
 Upon a day he gat him more moneie
 Than that the persone gat in monethes tweie.
 And thus with fained flattering and japes,
 He made the persone, and the peple, his apes.

But trewely to tellen atte last,
 He was in chirche a noble ecclesiast. 710
 Wel coude he rede a lesson or a storie,
 But alderbest he sang an offertorie :
 For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
 He muste preche, and wel afile his tonge,
 To winne silver, as he right wel coude :
 Therefore he sang the merier and loude.

Now have I told you shortly in a clause,
 Th'estat, th'araie, the nombre, and eke the cause
 Why that assembled was this compaignie
 In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrie, 720
 That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
 But now is time to you for to telle,
 How that we baren us that ilke night,
 Whan we were in that hostelrie alight.
 And after wol I telle of our viage,
 And all the remenant of our pilgrimage.

But firste I praie you of your curtesie,
 That ye ne arette it not my vilanie,
 Though that I plainly speke in this matere,
 To tellen you hir wordes and hir chere; 730
 Ne though I speke hir wordes proprely.
 For this ye knowen al so wel as I,
 Who so shall telle a tale after a man,
 He moste reherse, as neighe as ever he can,
 Everich word, if it be in his charge,
 All speke he never so rudely and so large;
 Or elles he moste tellen his tale untrewe,
 Or feinen thinges, or finden wordes newe.
 He may not spare, although he were his brother.
 He moste as wel sayn o word, as an other. 740
 Crist spake himself ful brode in holy writ,
 And wel ye wote no vilanie is it.
 Eke Plato sayeth, who so can him rede,
 The wordes moste ben cofin to the dede.

Also I praie you to forgive it me,
 All have I not sette folk in hir degree,
 Here in this tale, as that they shulden stonde.
 My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

Gret chere made oure hofte us everich on,
 And to the souper sette he us anon: 750
 And served us with vitaille of the beste.

Strong

THE PROLOGUE.

31

Strong was the win, and wel to drinke us leste.
 A femely man our hofte was with alle,
 For to han ben a marshal in an halle.
 A large man he was with eyen stepe,
 A fairer burgeis is ther non in Chepe :
 Bold of his speche, and wise and wel ytaught,
 And of manhood ^{fl}acked ~~him~~ right naught.
 Eke therto was he right a mery man,
 And after souper plaien he began, 760
 And spake of mirthe amonges other thinges,
 Whan that we hadden made our rekeninges;
 And faide thus; Now, lordinges, trewely
 Ye ben to me welcome right hertily :
 For by my trouthe, if that I shal not lie,
 I saw nat this yere swiche a compaignie
 At ones in this herberwe, as is now.
 Fayn wolde I do you mirthe, and I wiste how.
 And of a mirthe I am right now bethought,
 To don you ese, and it shall coste you nought. 770
 Ye gon to Canterbury; God you spede,
 The blisful martyr quite you your mede;
 And wel I wot, as ye gon by the way,
 Ye shapen you to talken and to play :
 For trewely comfort ne mirthe is non,
 To riden by the way dombe as the ston :
 And therefore wold I maken you disport,

him / e

As

As I said erst, and don you some comfort.
 And if you liketh alle by on assent
 Now for to stonden at my jugement : 780
 And for to werchen as I shal you say
 To-morwe, whan ye riden on the way,
 Now by my faders soule that is ded,
 But ye be mery, smiteth of my hed.
 Hold up your hondes withouten more speche.

Our conseil was not longe for to seche :
 Us thought it was not worth to make it wise,
 And granted him withouten more avise,
 And bad him say his verdict, as him leste.

Lordinges, (quod he) now herkeneth for the beste ;
 But take it nat, I pray you, in disdain ; 791
 This is the point, to speke it plat and plain,
 That eche of you to shorten with youre way,
 In this viage, shal tellen tales tway,
 To Canterbury ward, I mene it so,
 And homeward he shall tellen other two,
 Of adventures that whilom han befallē.
 And which of you that bereth him best of alle,
 That is to sayn, that telleth in this cas
 Tales of best sentence and most solas, 800
 Shal have a souper at youre aller cost
 Here in this place sitting by this post,
 Whan that ye comen agen from Canterbury.

And

THE PROLOGUE.

33

And for to maken you the more mery,
I wol my selven gladly with you fide,
Right at min owen cost, and be your gide.
And who that wol my jugement withsay,
Shal pay for alle we spenden by the way.
And if ye vouchesauf that it be so,
Telle me anon withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly shapen me therfore.

810

This thing was granted, and our othes swore
With ful glad herte, and praiden him also,
That he wold vouchesauf for to don so,
And that he wolde ben our governour,
And of our tales juge and reportour,
And sette a souper at a certain pris;
And we wol reuled ben at his devise,
In highe and lowe: and thus by on assent,
We ben accorded to his jugement.

820

And therupon the win was fette anon.
We dronken, and to reste weriten eche on,
Withouten any lenger tarying.

A morwe whan the day began to spring,
Up rose our hoste, and was our aller cok,
And gaderd us togeder in a flok,
And forth we riden a litel more than pas,
Unto the watering of Seint Thomas:
And ther our hoste began his hors areft,

And

And faide; lordes, herkeneth if you left. 830

Ye wete your forword, and I it record.

If even fong and morwe fong accord,

Let se now who shal telle the firste tale.

As ever mote I drinken win or ale,

Who so is rebel to my jugement,

Shal pay for alle that by the way is spent.

Now draweth cutte, or that ye forther twinne.

He which that hath the shorteft shal beginne.

Sire knight, (quod he) my maister and my lord,
Now draweth cutte, for that is min accord. 840

Cometh nere, (quod he) my lady prioreffe,

And ye fire clerk, let be your shamefastnesse,

Ne studieth nought. lay hand to, every man.

Anon to drawen every wight began,

And shortly for to tellen as it was,

Were it by aventure, or fort, or cas,

The sothe is this, the cutte felle on the knight,

Of which ful blith and glad was every wight;

And tell he must his tale as was reson,

By forword, and by composition, 850

As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?

And whan this good man saw that it was so,

As he that wise was and obedient

To kepe his forword by his free assent,

He faide; fithen I shal begin this game,

What,

THE PROLOGUE.

35

What, welcome be the cutte a goddes name.

Now let us ride, and herkeneth what I say.

And with that word we riden forth our way ;

And he began with right a mery chere,

His tale anon, and faide as ye shul here. 860

THE KNIGHTES TALE.

WHILOM, as olde stories tellen us,

Ther was a duk that highte Theseus.

Of Athenes he was lord and governour,

And in his time swiche a conquerour,

That greter was ther non under the sonne.

Ful many a riche contree had he wonne.

What with his wisdom and his chevalrie,

He conquerd all the regne of Feminie,

That whilom was ycleped Scythia ;

And wedded the freshe quene Ipolita, 870

And brought hire home with him to his contree

With mochel glorie and gret solempnitee,

And eke hire yonge fuster Emelie.

And thus with victorie and with melodie

Let I this worthy duk to Athenes ride,

And all his host, in armes him beside.

And certes, if it n'ere to long to here,

I wolde have told you fully the manere,

D 2

How

How wonnen was the regne of Feminie,
 By Theseus, and by his chevalrie; 880
 And of the grete bataille for the nones
 Betwix Athenes and the Amasones;
 And how assaged was Ipolita
 The faire hardy quene of Scythia;
 And of the feste, that was at hire wedding,
 And of the temple at hire home coming.
 But all this thing I mooste as now forbere.
 I have, God wot, a large feld to ere;
 And weke ben the oxen in my plow.
 The remenant of my tale is long ynow. 890
 I wil not letten eke non of this route.
 Let every felaw telle his tale aboute,
 And let se now who shal the souper winne.
 Ther as I left, I wil agen beginne.

This duk, of whom I made mentioun,
 Whan he was comen almost to the toun,
 In all his wele and in his mooste pride,
 He was ware, as he cast his eye aside,
 Wher that ther kneled in the highe wey
 A compaignie of ladies, twey and twey, 900
 Eche after other, clad in clothes blake:
 But swiche a crie and swiche a wo they make,
 That in this world n'is creature living,
 That ever herd swiche another waimenting.

And

And of this crie ne wolde they never stenten,
Till they the reines of his bridel henten.

What folk be ye that at min home coming
Perturben so my feste with crying ?

Quod Theseus ; have ye so grete envie
Of min honour, that thus complaine and crie ? 910
Or who hath you misboden, or offended ?
Do telle me, if that it may be amended ;
And why ye be thus clothed alle in blake ?

The oldest lady of hem all than spake,
Whan she had swouned with a dedly chere,
That it was reuthe for to seen and here.
She sayde ; lord, to whom fortune hath yeven
Victorie, and as a conquerour to liven,
Nought greveth us your glorie and your honour ;
But we beseke you of mercie and socour. 920
Have mercie on our woe and our distresse.
Som drope of pitee, thurgh thy gentillesse
Upon us wretched wimmen let now falle.
For certes, lord, ther n'is non of us alle,
That she n'hath ben a duchesse or a quene ;
Now be we caitives, as it is wel sene :
Thanked be fortune, and hire false whele,
That non estat ensureth to be wele.
And certes, lord, to abiden your presence
Here in this temple of the goddesse Clemence 930

38 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

We han ben waiting all this fourtenight :
Now helpe us, lord, sin it lieth in thy might.

I wretched wight, that wepe and waile thus,
Was whilom wif to king Capaneus,
That starfe at Thebes, curfed be that day ;
And alle we that ben in this aray,
And maken all this lamentation,
We loften alle our husbondes at that toun,
While that the sege therabouten lay.

And yet now the olde Creon, wala wa !

949

That lord is now of Thebes the citee,
Fulfilled of ire and of iniquitee,
He for despit, and for his tyrannie,
To don the ded bodies a vilanie,
Of alle our lordes, which that ben yslawe,
Hath alle the bodies on an hepe ydrawe,
And will not suffren hem by non assent
Neyther to ben yberied, ne ybrent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despite.

And with that word, withouten more respite 950
They fallen groff, and crien pitously ;
Have on us wretched wimmen som mercy,
And let our sorwe sinken in thin herte.

This gentil duk down from his courser sterte
With herte pitous, whan he herd hem speke.
Him thoughte that his herte wolde all to-breke,

Whan

Whan he saw hem so pitous and so mate,
That whilom weren of so gret estate.
And in his armes he hem all up hente,
And hem comforted in ful good entente, 960
And swore his oth, as he was trewe knight,
He wolde don so ferforthly his might
Upon the tyrant Creon hem to wreke,
That all the peple of Grece shulde speke,
How Creon was of Theseus yferved,
As he that hath his deth ful wel deserved.

And right anon withouten more abode
His banner he displaide, and forth he rode
To Thebes ward, and all his host beside :
No ner Athenes n'olde he go ne ride, 970
Ne take his ese fully half a day,
But onward on his way that night he lay :
And sent anon Ipolita the quene,
And Emelie hire yonge suster shene
Unto the toun of Athenes for to dwell :
And forth he rit ; ther n'is no more to tell.

The red statue of Mars with spere and targe
So shīneth in his white banner large,
That all the felde gliteren up and doun :
And by his banner borne is his penon 980
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete
The Minotaure which that he flew in Crete.

Thus rit this duk, thus rit this conquerour,
 And in his host of chevalrie the flour,
 Til that he came to Thebes, and alight
 Fayre in a feld, ther as he thought to fight,
 But shortly for to speken of this thing,
 With Creon, which that was of Thebes king,
 He fought, and slew him manly as a knight
 In plaine bataille, and put his folk to flight: 999
 And by assaut he wan the citee after,
 And rent adoun bothe wall and sparre, and rafter;
 And to the ladies he restored again
 The bodies of hir housbondes that were slain,
 To don the obsequies, as was tho the gise.

But it were all to long for to devise
 The grete clamour, and the waimenting,
 Whiche that the ladies made at the brenning
 Of the bodies, and ~~the~~ the gret honour,
 That Theseus the noble conquerour 1000
 Doth to the ladies, whan they from him wente:
 But shortly for to telle is min entente.

Whan that this worthy duk, this Theseus,
 Hath Creon slaine, and wonnen Thebes thus,
 Still in the feld he toke all night his reste,
 And did with all the contree as him leste.
 To ransake in the tas of bodies dede,
 Hem for to stripe of harneis and of wede,

Hem

The pillours dide hir besinesse and cure,
 After the bataille and discomfiture. 1010
 And so befell, that in the tas they found,
 Thurgh girt with many a grevous bloody wound,
 Two yonge knightes ligging by and by,
 Bothe in on armes, wrought ful richely :
 Of whiche two, Arcita highte that on,
 And he that other highte Palamon.
 Not fully quik, ne fully ded they were,
 But by hir cote armure, and by hir gere,
 The heraudes knew hem wel in special,
 As tho that weren of the blod real 1020
 Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborne.
 Out of the tas the pillours han hem torne,
 And han hem caried soft unto the tente
 Of Theseus, and he ful sone hem sente
 To Athenes, for to dwellen in prison
 Perpetuel, he n'olde no raunson.
 And whan this worthy duk had thus ydon,
 He toke his host, and home he rit anon
 With laurer crowned as a conquerour ;
 And ther he liveth in joye and in honour 1030
 Terme of his lif ; what nedeth wordes mo ?
 And in a tour, in anguish and in wo
 Dwellen this Palamon, and eke Arcite,
 For evermo, ther may no gold hem quite.

Thus

42 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

Thus passeth yere by yere, and day by day,
 Till it felle ones in a morwe of May
 That Emelie, that fayrer was to sene
 Than is the lilie upon his stalke grene,
 And fresher than the May with floures newe,
 (For with the rose colour strof hire hewe; 1040
 I n'ot which was the finer of hem two)
 Er it was day, as she was wont to do,
 She was arisen, and all redy dight.
 For May wol have no flogardie a night.
 The sefon priketh every gentil herte,
 And maketh him out of his slepe to sterte,
 And sayth, arise, and do thin observance.

This maketh Emelie han remembrance
 To don honour to May, and for to rise.
 Yclothed was she freshe for to devise. 1050
 Hire yelwe here was broided in a tresse,
 Behind hire back, a yerde long I gesse.
 And in the gardin at the sonne uprist
 She walketh up and doun wher as hire list.
 She gathereth floures, partie white and red,
 To make a fotel gerlond for hire hed,
 And as an angel, hevenlich she song.
 The grete tour, that was so thikke and strong,
 Which of the castel was the chef dongeon,
 (Wher as these knightes weren in prison, 1060
 Of

Of which I tolde you, and tellen shal)
 Was even joinant to the gardin wall,
 Ther as this Emelie had hire playing.

Bright was the sonne, and clere that morwening,
 And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
 As was his wone, by leve of his gayler
 Was risen, and romed in a chambre on high,
 In which he all the noble citee figh,
 And eke the gardin, ful of branches grene,
 Ther as this freshe Emelia the shene 1070
 Was in hire walk, and romed up and down.

This forweful prisoner, this Palamon
 Goth in his chambre roming to and fro,
 And to himselfe complaining of his wo :
 That he was borne ful oft he sayd, alas !

And so befell, by aventure or cas,
 That thurgh a window thikke of many a barre
 Of yren gret, and square as any sparre,
 He cast his eyen upon Emelia,
 And therwithal he blent and cried, a ! 1080
 As though he stongen were unto the herte.

And with that crie Arcite anon up sterde,
 And faide, cofin min, what eyleth thee,
 That art so pale and dedly for to see ?
 Why cridest thou ? who hath thee don offence ?
 For goddes love, take all in patience

Our

44 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

Our prifon, for it may non other be.
 Fortune hath yeven us this adverfite.
 Som wikke aspect or difpofition
 Of Saturne, by fom conftellation, 1090
 Hath yeven us this, although we had it fworn,
 So flood the heven whan that we were born,
 We moſte endure: this is the ſhort and plain.

This Palamon anſwerde, and ſayde again;
 Coſin, forſoth of this opinion
 Thou haſt a vaine imagination.

This prifon cauſed me not for to crie.
 But I was hurt right now thurghout min eye
 Into min herte, that wol my bane be.

The fayrneſſe of a lady that I ſe 1100
 Yond in the gardin roming to and fro,
 Is cauſe of all my crying and my wo.
 I n'ot whe'r ſhe be woman or goddeſſe.
 But Venus is it, ſothly, as I geſſe.

And therewithall on knees adoun he fill,
 And ſayde: Venus, if it be your will
 You in this gardin thus to transfigure,
 Beforn me ſorweful wretched creature,
 Out of this prifon helpe that we may ſcape.

And if ſo be our deſtine be ſhape 1110
 By eterne word to dien in prifon,
 Of our lignage have ſom compaſſion,

That

That is so low ybrought by tyrannie.

And with that word Arcita gan espie
Wher as this lady romed to and fro.
And with that sight hire Beaute hurt him so,
That if that Palamon were wounded fore,
Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or more.
And with a sigh he sayde pitously :

The freshe Beaute fleth me sodenly 1120
Of hire that rometh in the yonder place.
And but I have hire mercie and hire grace,
That I may seen hire at the leste way,
I n'am but ded ; ther n'is no more to fay.

This Palamon, whan he these wordes herd,
Dispitously he loked, and answered :
Whether sayest thou this in ernest or in play ?

Nay, quod Arcite, in ernest by my fay.
God helpe me so, me lust full yvel pley,

This Palamon gan knit his browes twey. 1130
It were, quod he, to thee no gret honour
For to be false, ne for to be traytour
To me, that am thy cosin and thy brother
Ysworne ful depe, and eche of us to other,
That never for to dien in the peine,
Til that the deth departen shal us tweine,
Neyther of us in love to hindre other,
Ne in non other cas, my leve brother ;

But

46 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

But that thou shuldest trewely forther me
In every cas, as I shuld forther thee. 1140

This was thin oth, and min also certain;
I wot it wel, thou darst it not withfain.

Thus art thou of my conseil out of doute.
And now thou woldest falsly ben aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And ever shal, til that min herte sserve.

Now certes, false Arcite, thou shalt not so.
I loved hire firste, and tolde thee my wo
As to my conseil, and my brother sworne
To forther me, as I have told beforne. 1150
For which thou art ybounden as a knight
To helpen me, if it lie in thy might,
Or elles art thou false, I dare wel sain.

This Arcita full proudly spake again.
Thou shalt, quod he, be rather false than I.
And thou art false, I tell thee utterly.
For *par amour* I loved hire first or thou.
What wolt thou sayn? thou wifest nat right now
Whether she were a woman or a goddesse.
Thin is affection of holinesse, 1160
And min is love, as to a creature:
For which I tolde thee min aventure
As to my cofin, and my brother sworne.

I pose, that thou lovedest hire beforne:

Woff

Wost thou not wel the olde clerkes sawe,
 That who shall give a lover any lawe?
 Love is a greter lawe by my pan,
 Then may be yeven of any erthly man:
 And therfore positif lawe, and swiche decree
 Is broken all day for love in eche degree. 1170
 A man moste nedes love maugre his hed.
 He may not fleen it, though he shuld be ded,
 All be she maid, or widewe, or elles wif.

And eke it is not likely all thy lif
 To stonden in hire grace, no more shal I:
 For wel thou wost thy selven veraily,
 That thou and I be damned to prison
 Perpetuel, us gaineth no raunson.

We strive, as did the houndes for the bone,
 They fought all day, and yet hir part was none. 1180
 Ther came a kyte, while that they were so wrothe,
 And bare away the bone betwix hem bothe.
 And therfore at the kinges court, my brother,
 Eche man for himself, ther is non other.
 Love if thee lust; for I love and ay shal:
 And sothly, leve brother, this is al.
 Here in this prison mosten we endure,
 And everich of us take his aventure.

Gret was the strif, and long betwix hem twey,
 If that I hadde leiser for to fey: 1190
 But

48 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

But to th' effect. it happed on a day,
 (To tell it you as shortly as I may)
 A worthy duk that highte Perithous,
 That felaw was to this duk Theseus
 Sin thilke day that they were children lite,
 Was come to Athenes, his felaw to visite,
 And for to play, as he was wont to do,
 For in this world he loved no man so:
 And he loved him as tendrely again.
 So wel they loved, as olde bokes fain, 1200
 That whan that on was ded, sothly to tell,
 His felaw wente and fought him down in hell:
 But of that storie list me not to write.

Duk Perithous loved wel Arcite,
 And had him knowe at Thebes yere by yere:
 And finally at request and praier
 Of Perithous, withouten any raunson
 Duk Theseus him let out of prison,
 Frely to gon, wher that him list over all,
 In swiche a gise, as I you tellen shall. 1210

This was the forword, plainly for to endite,
 Betwixen Theseus and him Arcite:
 That if so were, that Arcite were yfound
 Ever in his lif, by day or night, o ffound
 In any contree of this Theseus,
 And he were caught, it was accorded thus,

That

That with a swerd he shulde lese his hed;
 Ther was non other remedie ne rede.
 But taketh his leve, and homeward he him spedde;
 Let him beware, his nekke lieth to wedde. 1220

How gret a sorwe suffereth now Arcite?
 The deth he feleth thurgh his herte smite;
 He wepeth, waileth, crieth pitously;
 To flee himself he waiteth prively.
 He said; Alas the day that I was borne!
 Now is my prision werse than beforne:
 Now is me shapely eternally to dwelle
 Not only in purgatorie, but in helle.
 Alas! that ever I knew Perithous.
 For elles had I dwelt with Theseus 1230
 Yfetered in his prision evermo.
 Than had I ben in blisse, and not in wo.
 Only the fight of hire, whom that I serve,
 Though that I never hire grace may deserve,
 Wold have sufficed right ynough for me.

O dere cosin Palamon, quod he,
 Thin is the victorie of this aventure.
 Ful blisful in prision maigest thou endure:
 In prision? certes nay, but in paradise.
 Wel hath fortune yturned thee the disce, 1240
 That hast the fight of hire, and I th'absence.
 For possible is, sin thou hast hire presence,

50 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

And art a knight, a worthy and an able,
 That by som cas, fin fortune is changeable,
 Thou maieft to thy defir fomtime atteine.
 But I that am exiled, and barreine
 Of alle grace, and in fo gret despaire,
 That ther n'is erthe, water, fire, ne aire,
 Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
 That may me hele, or don comfort in this, 1250
 Wel ought I fterve in wanhope and distrefse.
 Farewel my lif, my luft, and my gladneffe.

Alas, why plainen men fo in commune
 Of purveiance of God, or of fortune,
 That yeveth hem ful oft in many a gife
 Wel better than they can hemself devise?
 Som man defireth for to have richeffe,
 That caufe is of his murdre or gret fikneffe.
 And fom man wold out of his prifon fayn
 That in his houle is of his meynie flain. 1260
 Infinite harmes ben in this matere.
 We wote not what thing that we praïen here.
 We faren as he that dronke is as a mous.
 A dronken man wot wel he hath an hous,
 But he ne wot which is the right way thider,
 And to a dronken man the way is flider.
 And certes in this world fo faren we.

We feken fast after felicite,

But

THE KNIGHTES TALE. 51

But we go wrong ful often trewely.
 Thus we may fayen alle, and namely I, 1270
 That wende, and had a gret opinion,
 That if I might escapen fro prison
 Than had I ben in joye and parfite hele,
 Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
 Sin that I may not seen you, Emelie,
 I n'am but ded; ther n'is no remedie.

Upon that other fide Palamon,
 Whan that he wist Arcita was agon,
 Swiche sorwe he maketh, that the grete tour
 Resounded of his yelling and clamour. 1280
 The pure fetters on his shinnés grete
 Were of his bitter salte teres wete.

Alas! quod he, Arcita cofin min,
 Of all our strif, God wot, the frute is thin,
 Thou walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
 And of my wo thou yevest litel charge.
 Thou maist, sith thou hast wisdom and manhede,
 Assemblen all the folk of our kinrede,
 And make a werre so sharpe on this contree,
 That by som aventure, or som treetee, 1290
 Thou maist have hire to lady and to wif,
 For whom that I must nedes lese my lif.
 For as by way of possibilittee,
 Sith thou art at thy large of prison free,

And art a lord, gret is thin advantage,
 More than is min, that sterve here in a cage.
 For I may wepe and waile, while that I live,
 With all the wo that prisson may me yeve,
 And eke with peine that love me yeveth also,
 That doubleth all my tourment and my wo. 1300

Therwith the fire of jalousie up sterte
 Within his brest, and hent him by the herte
 So woody, that he like was to behold
 The box-tree, or the ashen ded and cold.
 Than said he ; O cruel goddes, that governe
 This world with binding of your word eterne,
 And writen in the table of athamant
 Your parlement and your eterne grant,
 What is mankind more unto you yhold
 Than is the shepe, that rouketh in the fold ? 1310
 For flain is man, right as another beest,
 And dwelleth eke in prisson, and arrest,
 And hath siknesse, and gret adversite,
 And often times gilteles parde.

What governance is in this prescience,
 That gilteles turmenteth innocence ?
 And yet encrefeth this all my penance,
 That man is bounden to his observance
 For Goddes sake to leten of his will,
 Ther as a beest may all his lust fulfill. 1320

And

And whan a beest is ded, he hath no peine;
 But man after his deth mote wepe and pleine,
 Though in this world he have care and wo:
 Withouten doute it maye stonden so.

The answer of this lete I to divines,
 But wel I wote, that in this world gret pine is.
 Alas! I see a serpent or a thefe,
 That many a trewe man hath do meschefe,
 Gon at his large, and wher him lust may turn.
 But I mošte ben in prison thurgh Saturn, 1330
 And eke thurgh Juno, jalous and eke wood,
 That hath wel neye destrued all the blood
 Of Thebes, with his waste walles wide.
 And Venus fleeth me on that other side
 For jalousie, and fere of him Arcite.

Now wol I stent of Palamon a lite,
 And leten him in his prison still dwelle,
 And of Arcita forth I wol you telle.

The sommer passeth, and the nightes long
 Encrefen double wise the peines strong 1340
 Both of the lover, and of the prisoner.
 I n'ot which hath the wofuller mistere.
 For shortly for to say, this Palamon
 Perpetuelly is damned to prison,
 In chaines and in fetters to ben ded;
 And Arcite is exiled on his hed

For evermore as out of that contree,
Ne never more he shal his lady see.

You lovers axe I now this question,
Who hath the werse, Arcite or Palamon? 1359
That on may se his lady day by day,
But in prison moste he dwellen alway.
That other wher him lust may ride or go,
But sen his lady shal he never mo.
Now demeth as you liste, ye that can,
For I wol tell you forth as I began.

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful oft a day he swelt and said alas,
For sen his lady shal he never mo.
And shortly to concluden all his wo, 1360
So mochel sorwe hadde never creature,
That is or shal be, while the world may dure.
His slepe, his mete, his drinke is him byraft,
That lene he wex, and drie as is a shaft.
His eyen holwe, and grisly to behold,
His hewe falwe, and pale as ashen cold,
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And wailing all the night, making his mone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
Than wold he wepe, he mighte not be stent. 1370
So feble were his spirites, and so low,
And changed so, that no man coude know

His

His speche ne his vois, though men it herd.
 And in his gere, for all the world he ferd
 Nought only like the lovers maladie
 Of Ereos, but rather ylike manie,
 Engendred of humours melancolike,
 Beforne his hed in his celle fantaftike.
 And shortly turned was all up so down
 Both habit and eke dispositioun 1380
 Of him, this woful lover dan Arcite.

What shuld I all day of his wo endite?

Whan he endured had a yere or two
 This cruel torment, and this peine and wo,
 At Thebes, in his contree, as I said,
 Upon a night in slepe as he him laid,
 Him thought how that the winged god Mercury
 Beforne him stood, and bad him to be mery.
 His slepy yerde in hond he bare upright;
 An hat he wered upon his heres bright. 1390
 Arraied was this god (as he toke kepe)
 As he was whan that Argus toke his slepe;
 And said him thus: To Athenes shalt thou wende;
 Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende.

And with that word Arcite awoke and stert.
 Now trewely how fore that ever me smert,
 Quod he, to Athenes right now wol I fare.
 Ne for no drede of deth shal I not spare

56 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

To se my lady, that I love and serve;
 In hire presence I rekke not to fterve, 1400
 And with that word he caught a gret mirroir,
 And saw that changed was all his colour,
 And saw his visage all in another kind.
 And right anon it ran him in his mind,
 That fith his face was so disfigured
 Of maladie the which he had endured,
 He mighte wel, if that he bare him lowe,
 Live in Athenes evermore unknowe,
 And sen his lady wel nigh day by day,
 And right anon he changed his aray, 1410
 And clad him as a poure labourer.
 And all alone, save only a squier,
 That knew his privite and all his cas,
 Which was disguised pourely as he was,
 To Athenes is he gon the nexte way.
 And to the court he went upon a day,
 And at the gate he proffered his service,
 To drugge and draw, what so men wold devise,
 And shortly of this matere for to sayn,
 He fell in office with a chamberlain, 1420
 The which that dwelling was with Emelie.
 For he was wise, and coude sone espie
 Of every servant, which that served hire.
 Wel coude he hewen wood, and water bere,

For

For he was yonge and mighty for the nones,
 And therto he was strong and big of bones
 To don that any wight can him devise.

A yere or two he was in this service,
 Page of the chambre of Emelie the bright ;
 And Philostrate he sayde that he hight. 1430

But half so wel beloved a man as he,
 Ne was ther never in court of his degre.
 He was so gentil of condition,

That thurghout all the court was his renoun.
 They sayden that it were a charite

That Theseus wold enhaunsen his degre,
 And putten him in worshipful service,
 Ther as he might his vertues exercise.

And thus within a while his name is spronge
 Both of his dedes, and of his good tonge, 1440

That Theseus hath taken him so nere
 That of his chambre he made him a squier,
 And gave him gold to mainteine his degre ;
 And eke men brought him out of his contre
 Fro yere to yere ful prively his rent.

But honestly and sleighly he it spent,
 That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
 And thre yere in this wise his lif he ladde,
 And bare him so in pees and eke in werre,
 Ther n'as no man that Theseus hath derre. 1450

And

And in this blisse let I now Arcite,
And speke I wol of Palamon a lite.

In derkenesse and horrible and strong prison
This seven yere hath sitten Palamon,
Forpined, what for love and for distresse.
Who feleth double forwe and hevinesse
But Palamon? that love distraineth so,
That wood out of his wit he goth for wo,
And eke therto he is a prisonere
Perpetuell, not only for a yere.

1460

Who coude rime in English proprely
His martirdom? forsoth it am not I,
Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.
It fell that in the seventh yere in May
The thridde night, (as olde bokes sayn,
That all this storie tellen more plain)
Were it by aventure or destinee,
(As whan a thing is shapen, it shal be,)
That sone after the midnight, Palamon
By helping of a frend brake his prison,
And fleeth the cite faste as he may go,
For he had yeven drinke his gayler so
Of a clarre, made of a certain wine,
With Narcotikes and Opie of Thebes fine,
That all the night though that men wold him shake,
The gailer slept, he mighte not awake.

1470

And

And thus he fleeth as faste as ever he may.

The night was shorth, and faste by the day,
That nedes cost he moſte himſelven hide.

And to a grove faste ther beside 1480
With dredful foot than stalketh Palamon.

For shortly this was his opinion,
That in that grove he wold him hide all day,
And in the night than wold he take his way
To Thebes ward, his frendes for to preie
On Theseus to helpen him werreie.

And shortly, eyther he wold lese his lif,
Or winnen Emelie unto his wif.
This is the effect, and his entente plein.

Now wol I turnen to Arcite agein, 1490
That litel wist how neighe was his care,
Til that fortune had brought him in the snare.

The besy larke, the messager of day,
Saleweth in hire song the morwe gray;
And firy Phebus riseth up so bright,
That all the orient laugheth of the fight,
And with his stremes drieth in the greves
The silver dropes, hanging on the leves,
And Arcite, that is in the court real
With Theseus the squier principal, 1500
Is risen, and loketh on the mery day.
And for to don his observance to May,

Remem-

Remembring on the point of his desire,
 He on his courser, sterling as the fire,
 Is ridden to the felde him to pley,
 Out of the court, were it a mile or twey.
 And to the grove of which that I you told,
 By aventure his way he gan to hold,
 To maken him a gerlond of the greves,
 Were it of woodbind or of hauthorn leves, 1510
 And loud he song agen the sonne shene.

Maye

O May, with all thy floures and thy grene,
 Right welcome be thou faire freshe May,
 I hope that I some grene here gotten may.
 And from his courser, with a lusty herte
 Into the grove ful hastily he sterte,
 And in a path he romed up and doun,
 Ther as by aventure this Palamon
 Was in a bush, that no man might him se,
 For fore afered of his deth was he. 1520
 Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite.
 God wot he wold have trowed it ful lite.
 But soth is said, gon fithen are many yeres,
 That feld hath eyen, and the wood hath eres.
 It is ful faire a man to bere him even,
 For al day meten men at unset steven.
 Ful litel wote Arcite of his felaw,
 That was so neigh to herken of his saw,

For

For in the bush he sitteth now ful still.

Whan that Arcite had romed all his fill, 1530
 And songen all the roundel lustily,
 Into a studie he fell sodenly,
 As don these lovers in hir queinte geres,
 Now in the crop, and now down in the breres,
 Now up, now down, as boket in a well.
 Right as the Friday, sothly for to tell,
 Now shineth it, and now it raineth fast,
 Right so can gery Venus overcast
 The hertes of hire folk, right as hire day
 Is gerfull, right so changeth she aray. 1540
 Selde is the Friday all the weke ylike.

Whan Arcite hadde ysonge, he gan to fike,
 And fet him down withouten any more :
 Alas ! (quod he) the day that I was bore !
 How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee
 Wilt thou werreien Thebes the citee ?
 Alas ! ybrought is to confusion
 The blood real of Cadme and Amphion :
 Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man,
 That Thebes built, or firste the toun began, 1550
 And of the citee firste was crouned king.
 Of his lineage am I, and his ofspring
 By veray line, as of the stok real :
 And now I am so caitif and so thral,

That

62 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

That he that is my mortal enemy,
 I serve him as his squier pourely.
 And yet doth Juno me wel more shame,
 For I dare not beknowe min owen name,
 But ther as I was wont to highte Arcite,
 Now highte I Philostrate, not worth a mite. 1560
 Alas ! thou fell Mars, alas ! thou Juno,
 Thus hath your ire our lineage all fordo,
 Save only me, and wretched Palamon,
 That Theseus martireth in prision.
 And over all this, to slen me utterly,
 Love hath his firy dart so brenningly
 Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful hert,
 That shapen was my deth erst than my shert.
 Ye slen me with your eyen, Emelie ;
 Ye ben the cause wherfore that I die. 1570
 Of all the remenant of min other care
 Ne fet I not the mountance of a tare,
 So that I coud don ought to your plesance.
 And with that word he fell down in a trance
 A longe time ; and afterward up sterte
 This Palamon, that thought thurghout his herte
 He felt a colde swerd sodenly glide :
 For ire he quoke, no lenger wolde he hide.
 And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
 As he were wood, with face ded and pale, 1580
 He

He sterte him up out of the bushes thikke,
 And sayde : Falso Arcite, falso traitour wicke,
 Now art thou hent, that lovest my lady so,
 For whom that I have all this peine and wo,
 And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,
 As I ful oft have told thee herebeforn,
 And hast beiaped here duk Theseus,
 And falsely changed hast thy name thus ;
 I wol be ded, or elles thou shalt die.
 Thou shalt not love my lady Emelie, 1590
 But I wol love hire only and no mo.
 For I am Palamon thy mortal fo.
 And though that I no wepen have in this place,
 But out of prison am astert by grace,
 I drede nought, that eyther thou shalt die,
 Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelie.
 Chese which thou wilt, for thou shalt not asterte.

This Arcite tho, with ful dispitous herte,
 Whan he him knew, and had his tale herd,
 As fers as a leon, pulled out a sward, 1600
 And sayde thus ; By God that sitteth above,
 N'ere it that thou art fike, and wood for love,
 And eke that thou no wepen hast in this place,
 Thou shuldest never out of this grove pace,
 That thou ne shuldest dien of min hond.
 For I desie the suretee and the bond,

Which

64 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

Which that thou saist that I have made to thee.
 What? veray fool, thinke wel that love is free,
 And I wol love hire maugre all thy might.
 But for thou art a worthy gentil knight, 1610
 And wilnest to darraine hire by bataille,
 Have here my trowth, to-morwe I will not faille,
 Withouten weting of any other wight,
 That here I wol be founden as a knight,
 And bringen harneis right ynough for thee;
 And chese the beste, and leve the werste for me.
 And mete and drinke this night wol I bring
 Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
 And if so be that thou my lady win,
 And fle me in this wode, ther I am in, 1620
 Thou maist wel have thy lady as for me.

This Palamon answerd, I grant it thee.
 And thus they ben departed til a morwe,
 Whan eche of hem hath laid his faith to borwe.

O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
 O regne, that wolt no felaw have with thee!
 Ful soth is sayde, that love ne lordship
 Wol nat his thanks have no felawship.
 Wel finden that Arcite and Palamon.

Arcite is ridden anon unto the toun, 1630
 And on the morwe, or it were day light,
 Ful prively two harneis hath he dight,

Both

Both sufficient and mete to darreine
 The bataille in the feld betwix hem tweine.
 And on his hors, alone as he was borne,
 He carieth all this harneis him beforne;
 And in the grove, at time and place ysette,
 This Arcite and this Palamon ben mette.
 Tho changen gan the colour in hir face.
 Right as the hunter in the regne of Trace 1640
 That stondeth at a gappe with a spere,
 Whan hunted is the lion or the bere,
 And hereth him come rushing in the greves,
 And breking bothe the boughes and the leves,
 And thinketh, here cometh my mortal enemy,
 Withouten faille, he must be ded or I;
 For eyther I mote slen him at the gappe;
 Or he mote slen me, if that me mishappe:
 So ferden they, in changing of hir hewe,
 As fer as eyther of hem other knewe. 1650
 Ther n'as no good day, ne no saluing.
 But streit withouten wordes reherfing,
 Everich of hem halpe to armen other,
 As frendly, as he were his owen brother.
 And after that, with sharpe speres strong
 They foineden eche at other wonder long.
 Thou mightest wenen, that this Palamon
 In his fighting were as a wood leon,

And as a cruel tigre was Arcite :

As wilde bores gan they togeder smite, 1660

That frothen white as fume for ire wood.

Up to the ancle foughte they in hir blood.

And in this wise I let hem fighting dwelle,

And forth I wol of Theseus you telle.

The destinee, ministre general,

That executeth in the world over al

The purveiance, that God hath sen before ;

So strong it is, that though the world had sworne

The contrary of a thing by ya or nay,

Yet somtime it shall fallen on a day 1670

That falleth nat este in a thousand yere.

For certainly our appetites here,

Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,

All is this ruled by the sight above.

This mene I now by mighty Theseus,

That for to hunt is so desirous,

And namely at the grete hart in May,

¶ That in his bed ther dawpeth him no day,

That he n'is clad, and redy for to ride

With hunte and horne, and houndes him beside. 1680

For in his hunting hath he swiche delite,

That it is all his joye and appetite

To ben himself the grete hartes bane,

For after Mars he serveth now Diane.

Clerc

THE KNIGHTES TALE. 67

Clere was the day, as I have told or this,
 And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,
 With his Ipolita, the fayre quene,
 And Emelie, yclothed all in grene,
 On hunting ben they ridden really.
 And to the grove, that stood ther faste by, 1690
 In which ther was an hart as men him told,
 Duk Theseus the streite way hath hold.
 And to the launde he rideth him ful right,
 Ther was the hart ywont to have his flight,
 And over a brooke, and so forth on his wey.
 This duk wol have a cours at him or twey
 With houndes, swiche as him lust to commaunde.
 And when this duk was comen to the launde,
 Under the sonne he loked, and anon
 He was ware of Arcite and Palamon, 1700
 That foughten breme, as it were bolles two.
 The brighte swardes wenten to and fro
 So hidously, that with the leste stroke
 It semed that it wolde felle an oke.
 But what they weren, nothing he ne wote.
 This duk his courser with his sporres sinote,
 And at a ftert he was betwix hem two,
 And pulled out a sward, and cried, ho!
 No more, up peine of lesing of your hed.
 By mighty Mars, he shal anon be ded, 1710

That finiteth any stroke, that I may fen.
 But telleth me what mistere men ye ben,
 That ben so hardy for to fighten here
 Withouten any juge other officere,
 As though it were in listes really.

This Palamon answered hastily,
 And saide: Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
 We have the deth deserved bothe two.
 Two woful wretches ben we, two caitives,
 That ben accombred of our owen lives, 1720
 And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,
 Ne yeve us neyther mercie ne refuge.
 And fle me first, for seinte charitee.
 But fle my felaw eke as wel as me.
 Or fle him first, for though thou know it lite,
 This is thy mortal fo, this is Arcite,
 That fro thy lond is banished on his hed,
 For which he hath deserved to be ded.
 For this is he that came unto thy gate
 And sayde, that he highte Philostrate. 1730
 Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yere,
 And thou hast maked him thy chief squiere,
 And this is he, that loveth Emelie.

For sith the day is come that I shal die
 I make plainly my confession,
 That I am thilke woful Palamon,

That

That hath thy prifon broken wilfully.
 I am thy mortal fo, and it am I
 That loveth fo hot Emelie the bright,
 That I wold dien present in hire fight. 1740
 Therfore I axe deth and my iewife.
 But fle my felaw in the fame wife,
 For both we have deferved to be flain.

This worthy duk answerd anon again,
 And fayd, This is a fhort conclufion.
 Your owen mouth, by your confeffion
 Hath damned you, and I wol it recorde.
 It nedeth not to peine you with the corde.
 Ye fhul be ded by mighty Mars the rede.

The quene anon for veray womanhede 1750
 Gan for to wepe, and fo did Emelie,
 And all the ladies in the compaignie.
 Gret pite was it, as it thought hem alle,
 That ever fwiche a chance fhulde befalle,
 For gentil men they were of gret estat,
 And nothing but for love was this debat.
 And fawe hir bloody woundes wide and fore ;
 And alle criden bothe leffe and more,
 Have mercie, Lord, upon us wimmen alle,
 And on hir bare knees adoun they falle, 1760
 And wold have kift his feet ther as he flood,
 Till at the laft, aflaked was his mood ;

(For pitee renneth sone in gentil herte)
 And though he first for ire quoke and sterte,
 He hath considered shortly in a clause
 The trespass of hem both, and eke the cause ;
 And although that his ire hir guilt accused,
 Yet in his reson he hem both excused ;
 As thus ; he thoughte wel that every man
 Wol helpe himself in love if that he can, 1770
 And eke deliver himself out of prison,
 And eke his herte had compassion
 Of wimmen, for they wepten ever in on :
 And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,
 And soft unto himself he sayed : fie
 Upon a lord that wol have no mercie,
 But be a leon both in word and dede,
 To hem that ben in repentance and drede,
 As wel as to a proud dispitous man,
 That wol mainteinen that he first began, 1780
 That lord hath litel of discretion,
 That in swiche cas can no division :
 But weigheth pride and humbleffe after on.
 And shortly, whan his ire is thus agon,
 He gan to loken up with eyen light,
 And spake these same wordes all on hight.
 The god of love, a ! *benedicite*,
 How mighty and how grete a lord is he ?

Again

Again his might ther gainen non obstacles,
 He may be cleped a God for his miracles, 1790
 For he can maken at his owen gise
 Of everich herte, as that him list devise.

Lo here this Arcite, and this Palamon,
 That quiteley weren out of my prison,
 And might have lived in Thebes really,
 And weten I am hir mortal enemy,
 And that hir deth lith in my might also,
 And yet hath love, maugre hir eyen two,
 Ybrought hem hither bothe for to die.
 Now loketh, is not this an heigh folie? 1800

Who may ~~but~~ ben a fool, if ~~that~~ he love? *but*
 Behold for Goddes sake that sitteth above,
 Se how they blede! be they not wel araied?
 Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, hem paied
 Hir wages, and hir fees for hir service,
 And yet they wenen for to be ful wise,
 That serven love, for ought that may befall.
 And yet is this the beste game of alle,
 That she, for whom they have this jolite,
 Con hem therfore as moche thank as me, 1810
 She wot no more of alle this hote fare
 By God, than wot a cuckow or an hare.
 But all mote ben assaied hote or cold;
 A man mote ben a fool other yonge or old;

I wot it by myself ful yore agon :
 For in my time a fervant was I on.
 And therfore fith I know of loves peine,
 And wot how fore it can a man destreine,
 As he that oft hath ben caught in his las,
 I you foryeve all holly this trespas, 1820
 At request of the quene that kneleth here,
 And eke of Emelie, my suster dere.
 And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere,
 That never mo ye shul my contree dere,
 Ne maken werre upon me night ne day,
 But ben my frendes in alle that ye may.
 I you foryeve this trespas every del.
 And they him sware his axing fayr and wel,
 And him of lordship and of mercie praid,
 And he hem granted grace, and thus he said : 1830
 To speke of real linage and richeffe,
 Though that she were a quene or a princeffe,
 Eche of you bothe is worthy douteles
 To wedden whan time is, but natheles
 I speke as for my suster Emelie,
 For whom ye have this strif and jalousie,
 Ye wot yourself, she may not wedden two
 At ones, though ye fighten evermo :
 But on of you, al be him loth or lese,
 He mot gon pipen in an ivy lese : 1840

This

This is to say, she may not have you bothe,
 Al be ye never so jalous, ne so wrothe.
 And forthy I you put in this degree,
 That eche of you shal have his destinee,
 As him is shape, and herkneth in what wise;
 Lo here your ende of that I shal devise.

My will is this for plat conclusion
 Withouten any replication,
 If that you liketh, take it for the beste,
 That everich of you shal gon wher him leste 1850
 Freely withouten raunson or dangere;
 And this day fifty wekes, ferre ne nere,
 Everich of you shal bring an hundred knightes,
 Armed for listes up at alle rightes
 Alle redy to darrein hire by bataille.
 And this behete I you withouten faille
 Upon my trouth, and as I am a knight,
 That whether of you bothe hath that might,
 This is to sayn, that whether he or thou
 May with his hundred, as I spake of now, 1860
 Sle his contrary, or out of listes drive,
 Him shal I yeven Emelie to wive,
 To whom that fortune yeveth so fayr a grace.

The listes shal I maken in this place,
 And God so wisly on my soule rewe,
 As I shal even juge ben, and trewe.

Ye

Ye shal non other ende with me maken
 That on of you ne shal be ded or taken.
 And if you thinketh this is wel yfald,
 Saith your avis, and holdeth you apaid. 1870
 This is your ende, and your conclusion.

Who loketh lightly now but Palamon?
 Who springeth up for joye but Arcite?
 Who coud it tell, or who coud it endite,
 The joye that is makid in the place
 Whan Theseus hath don so fayre a grace?
 But doun on knees went every manere wight,
 And thanked him with all hir hertes might,
 And namely these Thebanes often fith. 1879

And thus with good hope and with herte blith
 They taken hir leve, and homeward gan they ride
 To Thebes, with his olde walles wide.

I trowe men wolde deme it negligence,
 If I foryete to tellen the dispence
 Of Theseus, that goth so befily
 To maken up the listes really,
 That swiche a noble theatre as it was,
 I dare wel sayn, in all this world ther n'as.
 The circuite a mile was aboute,
 Walled of stone, and diked all withoute. 1890
 Round was the shape, in manere of a compas
 Ful of degrees, the hight of fixty pas,

That

That whan a man was fet on o degree
 He letted not his felaw for to see.
 Estward ther stood a gate of marbel white,
 Westward right swiche another in th' opposite.
 And shortly to concluden, swiche a place
 Was never in erthe, in so litel a space,
 For in the lond ther n'as no craftes man,
 That geometrie, or arismetrike can,
 Ne portrejour, ne kerver of images,
 That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages
 The theatre for to maken and devise.

1900

And for to don his rite and sacrifice,
 He estward hath upon the gate above,
 In worship of Venus goddesse of love,
 Don make an auter and an oratorie;
 And westward in the minde and in memorie
 Of Mars he maked hath right swiche another,
 That coste largely of gold a fother.

1910

And northward, in a touret on the wall,
 Of alabastre white and red corall
 An oratorie riche for to see,
 In worship of Diane of chastitee,
 Hath Theseus don wrought in noble wise.

But yet had I foryetten to devise
 The noble kerving, and the portreitures,
 The shape, the contenance of the figures

That

That weren in these oratories three.

First in the temple of Venus maist thou see 1920
 Wrought on the wall, ful pitous to beholde,
 The broken slepes, and the fikes colde,
 The sacred teres, and the waimentinges,
 The firy strokes of the desiringes,
 That loves fervants in this lif enduren;
 The othes, that hir covenants assuren.
 Plesance and hope, desire, foolhardinesse,
 Beaute and youthe, baudrie and richeffe,
 Charmes and force, lesinges and flaterie,
 Dispence, befinesse, and jaloufie, 1930
 That wered of yelwe goldes a gerlond,
 And hadde a cuckow sitting on hire hond,
 + Festes and instruments, caroles and dances,
 Lust and array, and all the circumstances
 Of love, which that I reken and reken shall,
 By ordre weren peinted on the wall,
 And mo than I can make of mention.
 For sothly all the mount of Citheron,
 Ther Venus hath hire principal dwelling,
 Was shewed on the wall in purtreying, 1940
 With all the gardin, and the lustinesse.
 Nought was foryetten the porter idelnesse,
 Ne Narcissus the fayre of yore agon,
 Ne yet the folie of king Salomon,

Ne

+ *Festes, instrumentes, and*

Ne yet the grete strengthe of Hercules,
 Th' enchantment of Medea and Circes,
 Ne of Turnus the hardy fiers corage,
 The riche Crefus caitif in servage.
 Thus may ye seen, that wisdom ne richeffe,
 Beaute ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardinesse, 1950
 Ne may with Venus holden champartie,
 For as hire listeth the world may she gie.
 Lo, all these folk so caught were in hire las
 Til they for wo ful often said alas.
 Sufficeth here ensamples on or two,
 And yet I coude reken a thousand mo.

The statue of Venus glorious for to see
 Was naked fleting in the large see,
 And fro the navel down all covered was
 With wawes grene, and bright as any glas. 1960
 A citole in hire right hand hadde she,
 And on hire hed, ful semely for to see,
 A rose gerlond fresfh, and wel smelling,
 Above hire hed hire doves fleckering.
 Before hire stood hire sone Cupido,
 Upon his shoulders winges had he two;
 And blind he was, as it is often sene;
 A bow he bare and arwes bright and kene.

Why shulde I not as wel eke tell you all
 The purtreiture, that was upon the wall 1970
 Within

liste
^

Within the temple of mighty Mars the rede ?
 All peynted was the wall in length and brede
 Like to the estres of the grisly place,
 That highte the gret temple of Mars in Trace,
 In thilke colde and frosty region,
 Ther as Mars hath his sovereine mansion.

First on the wall was peynted a forest,
 In which ther wonneth neyther man ne best,
 With knotty knarry barrein trees old
 Of stubbes sharpe and hidous to behold ; 1980
 In which ther ran a romble and a swough,
 As though a storme shuld bresten every bough :
 And downward from an hill under a bent,
 Ther stood the temple of Mars armipotent,
 Wrought all of burned stele, of which th' entree
 Was longe and streite, and gastly for to see.
 And therout came a rage and swiche a vise,
 That it made all the gates for to rise,
 The northern light in at the dore shone,
 For window on the wall ne was ther none, 1990
 Thurgh which men mighten any light discerne.
 The dore was all of athamant eterne,
 Yclenched overthwart and endelong
 With yren tough, and for to make it strong,
 Every piler the temple to sustene
 Was tonne-gret, of yren bright and shene.

Ther

Ther saw I first the derke imagining
Of felonie, and alle the compassing ;
The cruel ire, red as any glede,
The pikepurse, and eke the pale drede ; 2000
The smiler with the knif under the cloke,
The shepen brenning with the blake smoke ;
The treson of the mording in the bedde,
The open werre, with woundes all bebledde ;
Conteke with bloody knif, and sharp manace.
All full of chirking was that fory place.
The fleer of himself yet saw I there,
His herte blood hath bathed all his here :
The naile ydriven in the shode on hight,
The colde deth, with mouth gaping upright. 2010
Amiddes of the temple fate mischance,
With discomfort and fory contenance.
Yet saw I woodnesse laughing in his rage,
Armed complaint, outhees, and fiers outrage ;
The carraine in the bush, with throte ycorven,
A thousand slain, and not of qualme ystorven ;
The tirant, with the prey by force yraft ;
The toun destroyed, ther was nothing laft.
Yet saw I brent the shippes hoppesteres,
The hunte ystrangled with the wilde beres :
The sow freting the child right in the cradel ;
The coke yscalled, for all his long ladel.

Nought

80 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

Nought was foryete by th' infortune of Marte
The carter overriden with his carte ;
Under the wheel ful low he lay adoun.

Ther were also of Martes division,
Th' armerer, and the bowyer, and the smith,
That forgeth sharpe swardes on his stith.
And all above depeinted in a tour
Saw I conquest, sitting in gret honour, 2030
With thilke sharpe sward over his hed
Yhanging by a subtil twined thred.
Depeinted was the slaughter of Julius,
Of gret Nero, and of Antonius :

All be that thilke time they were unborne,
Yet was hir deth depeinted ther beforne,
By manacing of Mars, right by figure,
So was it shewed in that purtreiture
As is depeinted in the cercles above,
Who shal be slaine or elles ded for love. 2040
Sufficeth on ensample in stories olde,
I may not reken hem alle, though I wolde.

The statue of Mars upon a carte stood
Armed, and loked grim as he were wood,
And over his hed ther shinen two figures
Of sterres, that ben cleped in scriptures,
That on Puella, that other Rubeus.
This god of armes was araied thus :

A wolf

A wolf ther stood beforne him at his fete
 With eyen red, and of a man he ete : 2050
 With subtil pensil peinted was this storie,
 In redouting of Mars and of his glorie.

Now to the temple of Diane the chaste
 As shortly as I can I wol me haste,
 To tellen you of the descriptioun,
 Depeinted by the walles up and down,
 Of hunting and of shamefast chastitee.
 Ther saw I how woful Calistope,
 Whan that Diane agreved was with here,
 Was turned from a woman til a bere, 2060
 And after was she made the lodesterre :
 Thus was it peinted, I can say no ferre ;
 Hire sone is eke a sterre as men may see.
 Ther saw I Dane yturned til a tree,
 I mene not hire the goddesse Diane,
 But Peneus daughter, which that highte Dane.
 Ther saw I Atteon an hart ymaked,
 For vengeance that he saw Diane all naked :
 I saw how that his houndes have him caught,
 And freten him, for that they knew him naught. 2070
 Yet peinted was a litel forthermore,
 How Athalante hunted the wilde bore,
 And Meleagre, and many another mo,
 For which Diane wroughte hem care and wo.

Ther saw I many another wonder storie,
The which me liste not drawn to memorie.

This goddesse on an hart ful heye sete,
With smale houndes all aboute hire sete,
And underneth hire feet she hadde a mone,
Wexing it was, and shulde wanen sone. 2080
In gaudy grene hire statue clothed was,
With bow in hond, and arwes in a cas,
Hire eyen caste she ful low adoun,
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
A woman travailling was hire before,
But for hire childe so longe was unborne
Ful pitously Lucina gan she call,
And sayed; helpe, for thou mayst beste of all.
Wel coude he peinten listy that it wrought,
With many a florein he the hewes bought. 2090

Now ben these listes made, and Theseus
That at his grete cost arraied thus
The temples, and the theatre everidel,
Whan it was don, him liked wonder wel.
But stint I wol of Theseus a lite,
And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.

The day approacheth of hir returning,
That everich shuld an hundred knightes bring,
The bataille to daireine, as I you told;
And til Athenes hir covenant for to hold, 2100
Hath

Hath everich of hem brought an hundred knightes
 Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.
 And fikerly, ther trowed many a man
 That never fithen that the world began,
 As for to speke of knighthood of hir hond,
 As fer as God hath maked fee and lond,
 N'as of so fewe, so noble a compaignie.
 For every wight that loved chevalrie,
 And wold his thanks han a passant name,
 Hath praied, that he might ben of that game, 2110
 And wel was him, that therto chosen was.
 For if ther fell to-morwe swiche a cas,
 Ye knowen wel, that every lusty knight,
 That loveth *par amour*, and hath his might,
 Were it in Englelond, or elleswher,
 They wold hir thanks willen to be ther.
 To fight for a lady, a! *benedicite*,
 It were a lusty fighte for to fe.

And right so ferden they with Palamon.
 With him ther wenten knightes many on. 2120
 Som wol ben armed in an habergeon,
 And in a breft plate, and in a gipon;
 And som wol have a pair of plates large,
 And som wol have a Pruce sheld, or a targe;
 Som wol ben armed on his legges wele,
 And have an axe, and som a mace of stele.

Ther n'is no newe guise, that it n'as old.
 Armed they weren, as I have you told,
 Everich after his opinion.

Ther maist thou se coming with Palamon 2130
 Licurge himself, the grete king of Trace:
 Blake was his berd, and manly was his face.
 The cercles of his eyen in his hed
 They gloweden betwixen yelwe and red,
 And like a griffon loked he about,
 With kemped heres on his browes stout;
 His limmes gret, his braunes hard and stronge,
 His shouldres brode, his armes round and longe.
 And as the guise was in his contree,
 Ful highe upon a char of gold stood he, 2140
 With foure white bolles in the trais.
 Instede of cote armure on his harnais,
 With nayles yelwe, and bright as any gold,
 He hadde a beres skin, cole-blake for old.
 His longe here was kempt behind his bak,
 As any ravenes fether it shone for blake.
 A wreth of gold arm-gret, of huge weight,
 Upon his hed fate ful of stones bright,
 Of fine rubins and of diamants.
 About his char ther wenten white alauns, 2150
 Twenty and mo, as gret as any stere,
 To huntten at the leon or the dere,

And

And folwed him, with mosel fast ybound,
 Colered with gold, and torettes filed round.
 An hundred lordes had he in his route
 Armed full wel, with hertes sterne and stoute.

With Arcita, in stories as men find,
 The gret Emetrius the king of Inde,
 Upon a stede bay, trapped in stele,
 Covered with cloth of gold diapred wele, 2160
 Came riding like the god of armes Mars.
 His cote armure was of a cloth of Tars,
 Couched with perles, white, and round and grete.
 His fadel was of brent gold new ybete;
 A mantelet upon his shouldres hanging
 Bret-ful of rubies red, as fire sparkling.
 His crispe here like ringes was yronne,
 And that was yelwe, and glitered as the sonne.
 His nose was high, his eyen bright citrin,
 His lippes round, his colour was sanguin, 2170
 A fewe fraknes in his face yspreint,
 Betwixen yelwe and blake somdel ymeint,
 And as a leon he his loking caste.
 Of five and twenty yere his age I caste.
 His berd was wel begonnen for to spring;
 His vois was as a trompe thondering.
 Upon his hed he wered of laurer grene
 A gerlond freshe and lusty for to sene.

86 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

Upon his hond he bare for his deduit

An egle tame, as any lily whit.

2180

An hundred lordes had he with him there,

All armed save hir hedes in all hir gere,

Ful richely in alle manere thinges.

For trusteth wel, that erles, dukes, kinges

Were gathered in this noble compaignie,

For love, and for encrese of chevalrie.

About this king ther ran on every part

Ful many a tame leon and leopart.

And in this wise, these lordes all and some

Ben on the Sonday to the citee come

2190

Abouten prime, and in the toun alight.

This Theseus, this duk, this worthy knight,

Whan he had brought hem into his citee,

And inned hem, everich at his degree,

He festeth hem, and doth so gret labour

To esen hem, and don hem all honour,

That yet men wenen that no mannes wit

Of non estat ne coud amenden it.

The minstralcie, the service at the feste,

The grete yestes to the most and leste,

2200

The riche array of Theseus paleis,

Ne who fate first ne last upon the deis,

What ladies fayrest ben or best dancing,

Or which of hem can carole best or sing,

Ne

THE KNIGHTES TALE. 87

Ne who most felingly speketh of love ;
 What haukes sitten on the perche above,
 What houndes liggen on the floor adoun,
 Of all this now make I no mentioun ;
 But of the effect ; that thinketh me the beste ; 2209
 Now cometh the point, and herkeneth if you leste.

The Sonday night, or day began to spring,
 Whan Palamon the larke herde sing,
 Although it n'ere not day by houres two,
 Yet sang the larke, and Palamon right tho
 With holy herte, and with an high corage
 He rose, to wenden on his pilgrimage
 Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,
 I mene Venus, honourable and digne.
 And in hire houre, he walketh forth a pas
 Unto the listes, ther hire temple was, 2220
 And doun he kneleth, and with humble chere
 And herte sore, he sayde as ye shul here,

Fayrest of fayre, o lady min Venus,
 Daughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,
 Thou glader of the mount of Citheron,
 For thilke love thou haddest to Adon
 Have pitee on my bitter teres finert,
 And take myn humble praier at thin hei...

Alas ! I ne have no langage to tell
 The effecte, ne the torment of min hell ; 2230

Min herte may min harmes not bewrey ;
 I am so confuse, that I cannot say.
 But mercy, lady bright, that knowest wele
 My thought, and feest what harmes that I fele,
 Consider all this, and rue upon my fore,
 As wisly as I shall for evermore
 Emforth my might, thy trewe servant be,
 And holden werre alway with chastite :
 That make I min avow, so ye me helpe.
 I kepe nought of armes for to yelpe, 2240
 Ne axe I nat to-morwe to have victorie,
 Ne renoun in this cas, ne vaine glorie
 Of pris of armes, blowen up and down,
 But I wold have fully possessioun
 Of Emelie, and die in hire servise ;
 Find thou the manere how, and in what wise.
 I rekke not, but it may better be,
 To have victorie of hem, or they of me,
 So that I have my lady in min armes.
 For though so be that Mars is god of armes, 2250
 Your vertue is so grete in heven above,
 That if you liste, I shal wel have my love.
 Thy temple wol I worship evermo,
 And on thin auter, wher I ride or go,
 I wol don sacrifice, and fires bete.
 And if ye wol not so, my lady swete,

Than

Than pray I you, to-morwe with a spere
 That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
 Than rekke I not whan I have lost my lif,
 Though that Arcita win hire to his wif. 2260
 This is the effecte and ende of my praier; ;
 Yeve me my love, thou blisful lady dere.

Whan the orison was don of Palamon,
 His sacrifice he did, and that anon,
 Full pitously, with alle circumstances,
 All tell I not as now his observances.
 But at the last the statue of Venus shoke,
 And made a signe, wherby that he toke,
 That his praier accepted was that day.
 For though the signe shewed a delay, 2270
 Yet wist he wel that granted was his bone;
 And with glad herte he went him home ful sone.

The thridde houre inequal that Palamon
 Began to Venus temple for to gon,
 Up rose the sonne, and up rose Emelie,
 And to the temple of Diane gan hie.
 Hire maydens, that she thider with hire ladde,
 Ful redily with hem the fire they hadde,
 Th'encense, the clothes, and the remenant all,
 That to the sacrifice longen shall. 2280
 The hornes ful of mede, as was the gise,
 Ther lacked nought to don hire sacrifice.

Smoking

Smoking the temple, ful of clothes fayre,
 This Emelie with herte debonaire
 Hire body weshe with water of a well.
 But how she did hire rite I dare not tell;
 But it be any thing in general;
 And yet it were a game to heren all;
 To him that meneth wel it n'ere no charge:
 But it is good a man to ben at large. 2290
 Hire bright here kembed was, untressed all.
 A coroune of a grene oke cerial
 Upon hire hed was fet ful fayre and mete.
 Two fires on the auter gan she bete,
 And did hire thinges, as men may behold
 In Stace of Thebes, and these bokes old.

Whan kindled was the fire, with pitous chere
 Unto Diane she spake, as ye may here.

O chaste goddesse of the wodes grene,
 To whom both heven and erthe and see is sene, 2300
 Quene of the regne of Pluto, derke and lowe,
 Goddesse of maydens, that min herte hast knowe
 Ful many a yere, and wost what I desire,
 As kepe me fro thy vengeance and thin ire,
 That Atteon aboughte cruelly:
 Chaste goddesse, wel wotest thou that I
 Desire to ben a mayden all my lif,
 Ne never wol I be no love ne wif,

I am (thou wost) yet of thy compaignie,
A mayde, and love hunting and venerie, 2310
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
And not to ben a wif, and be with childe.
Nought wol I knowen compaignie of man.
Now helpe me, lady, fith ye may and can,
For tho three formes that thou hast in thee.
And Palamon, that hath swiche love to me,
And eke Arcite, that loveth me so fore,
This grace I praie thee withouten more,
As fende love and pees betwix hem two :
And fro me torne away hir hertes so, 2320
That all hir hote love, and hir desire,
And all hir besy torment, and hir fire
Be queinte, or torned in another place.
And if so be thou wolt not do me grace,
Or if my destinee be shapen so,
That I shall nedes have on of hem two,
As fende me him that most defireth me.
Beholde, goddesse of clene chastite,
The bitter teres, that on my chekes fall.
Sin thou art mayde, and keper of us all, 2330
My maydenhed thou kepe and wel conserve,
And while I live, a mayde I wol thee serve.
The fires brenne upon the auter clere,
While Emelie was thus in hire praier :

But

92 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

But sodenly she saw a fighte queinte.
 For right anon on of the fires queinte,
 And quiked again, and after that anon
 That other fire was queinte, and all agon :
 And as it queinte, it made a whisteling,
 As don these brondes wet in hir brenning. 2340
 And at the brondes ende outran anon
 As it were bloody dropes many on :
 For which so sore agast was Emelie,
 That she was wel neigh mad, and gan to crie,
 For she ne wiste what it signified ;
 But only for the fere thus she cried,
 And wept, that it was pitee for to here.

And therewithall Diane gan appere
 With bowe in hond, right as an huntresse,
 And sayde ; doughter, stint thin hevinessse. 2350
 Among the goddes highe it is affermed,
 And by eterne word written and confermed,
 Thou shalt be wedded unto on of tho,
 That han for thee so mochel care and wo :
 But unto which of hem I may not tell.
 Farewel, for here I may no longer dwell.
 The fires which that on min auter brenne,
 Shal thee declaren er that thou go henne,
 Thin aventure of love, as in this cas.

And with that word, the arwes in the cas 2360

Of

THE KNIGHTES TALE.

9

Of the goddesse clatteren fast and ring,
And forth she went, and made a vanishing,
For which this Emelie astonied was,
And sayde; what amounteth this, alas!
I putte me in thy protection,
Diane, and in thy disposition.
And home she goth anon the nexte way.
This is the effecte, ther n'is no more to say.

The nexte houre of Mars folwing this
Arcite unto the temple walked is
Of fierce Mars, to don his sacrificise
With all the rites of his payen wise.
With pitous herte and high devotion,
Right thus to Mars he sayde his orison.

2370

O stronge god, that in the regnes cold
Of Trace honoured art, and lord yhold,
And hast in every regne and every lond
Of armes all the bridel in thin hond,
And hem fortuneest as thee list devise,
Accept of me my pitous sacrificise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my might be worthy for to serve
Thy godhed, that I may ben on of thine,
Than praje I thee to rewe upon my pine,
For thilke peine, and thilke hote fire,
In which thou whilom brendest for desire

2380

Whanne that thou usedest the beautee
 Of fayre yonge Venus, freshe and free,
 And haddest hire in armes at thy wille :
 Although thee ones on a time misfille, 2390
 Whan Vulcanus had caught thee in his las,
 And fond thee ligging by his wif, alas !
 For thilke forwe that was tho in thin herte,
 Have reuthe as wel upon my peines smerte.

I am yonge and unkonning, as thou wost,
 And, as I trow, with love offended most,
 That ever was ony lives creature :
 For she, that doth me all this wo endure,
 Ne recceth never, whether I sinke or flete.
 And wel I wot, or she me mercy hete, 2400
 I mooste with strengthe win hire in the place :
 And wel I wot, withouten helpe or grace
 Of thee, ne may my strengthe not availle :
 Than helpe me, lord, to-morwe in my bataille,
 For thilke fire that whilom brenned thee,
 As wel as that this fire now brenneth me ;
 And do, that I to-morwe may han victorie.
 Min be the travaille, and thin be the glorie.
 Thy soveraine temple wol I most honouren
 Of ony place, and alway most labouren 2410
 In thy plesance and in thy craftes strong,
 And in thy temple I wol my baner hong,

And all the armes of my compaignie,
 And evermore, until that day I die,
 Eterne fire I wol beforne thee find.
 And eke to this avow I wol me bind.
 My berd, my here that hangeth long adoun,
 That never yet felt non offension
 Of rasour ne of shere, I wol thee yeve,
 And ben thy trewe servant while I live. 2420
 Now, lord, have reuthe upon my forwes fore,
 Yeve me the victorie, I axe thee no more.

The praier stint of Arcita the stronge,
 The ringes on the temple dore that honge,
 And eke the dores clattereden ful fast,
 Of which Arcita fomwhat him agast.
 The fires brent upon the auter bright,
 That it gan all the temple for to light;
 A swete smell anon the ground up yaf,
 And Arcita anon his hond up haf, 2430
 And more encense into the fire he cast,
 With other rites mo, and at the last
 The statue of Mars began his hauberke ring;
 And with that soun he herd a murmuring
 Ful low and dim, that sayde thus, Victorie.
 For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie.

And thus with joye, and hope wel to fare
 Arcite anon unto his inne is fare

As

As fayn as foul is of the brighte sonne.

And right anon swiche strif ther is begonne 2440
 For thilke granting, in the heven above,
 Betwixen Venus the goddesse of love,
 And Mars the sterne god armipotent,
 That Jupiter was besy it to stent :
 Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
 That knew so many of adventures olde,
 Fond in his olde experience and art,
 That he ful sone hath plesed every part.
 As sooth is sayd, elde hath gret advantage,
 In elde is bothe wisdom and usage : 2450
 Men may the old out-renne, but not out-rede.

Saturne anon, to stenten strif and drede,
 Al be it that it is again his kind,
 Of all this strif he gan a remedy find.

My dere doughter Venus, quod Saturne,
 My cours that hath so wide for to turne,
 Hath more power than wot any man.
 Min is the drenching in the see so wan,
 Min is the prison in the derke cote,
 Min is the strangel and hanging by the throte, 2460
 The murmure, and the cherles rebelling,
 The groyning, and the prive empoysoning.
 I do vengeance and pleine correction,
 While I dwell in the signe of the leon.

Min

Min is the ruine of the highe halles,
 The falling of the toures and of the walles
 Upon the minour, or the carpenter :
 I flew Sampson in shaking the piler:
 Min ben also the maladies colde,
 The derke tresons, and the castes olde : 2470
 My lokng is the fader of pestilence.

Now wepe no more, I shal do diligence,
 That Palamon, that is thin owen knight,
 Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.
 Thogh Mars shal help his knight yet natheles.
 Betwixen you ther mot somtime be pees :

All be ye not of o complexion,
 That causeth all day swiche division.
 I am thin ayel, redy at thy will ;
 Wepe now no more, I shal thy lust fulfill. 2480

Now wol I stenten of the goddes above,
 Of Mars, and of Venus goddesse of love,
 And tellen you as plainly as I can
 The gret effect, for which that I began.

Gret was the feste in Athenes thilke day,
 And eke the lusty seson of that May
 Made every wight to ben in swiche plesance,
 That all that monday justen they and dance,
 And spenden it in Venus highe servise.

But by the cause that they shulden rise 2490

Erly a-morwe for to seen the fight,
 Unto hir reste wenten they at night.
 And on the morwe whan the day gan spring,
 Of hors and harneis noise and clattering
 Ther was in the hostelryes all aboute :
 And to the paleis rode ther many a route
 Of lordes, upon stedes and palfreis.

Ther mayst thou see devising of harneis
 So uncouth and so riche, and wrought so wele
 Of goldsmithry, of brouding, and of stele ; 2500
 The sheldes brighte, testeres, and trappures ;
 Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote armures ;
 Lordes in parementes on hir courseres,
 Knightes of retenue, and eke squieres,
 Nailing the speres, and helmes bokeling,
 Gniding of sheldes, with lainers lacing ;
 Ther as nede is, they weren nothing idel :
 The fomy stedes on the golden bridel
 Gnawing, and fast the armureres also
 With file and hammer priking to and fro ; 2510
 Yemen on foot, and communes many on
 With shorte staves, thicke as they may gon ;
 Pipes, trompes, nakeres, and clariounes,
 That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes ;
 The paleis ful of peple up and down,
 Here three, ther ten, holding hir questioun,
 Devining

Devining of these Theban knightes two.
 Som sayden thus, som sayde it shal be so;
 Som helden with him with the blacke berd,
 Som with the balled, som with the thick herd; 2520
 Som saide he loked grim, and wolde fighte:
 He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte.

Thus was the halle full of devining
 Long after that the sonne gan up spring.
 The gret Theseus that of his slepe is waked
 With minstrelcie and noise that was maked,
 Held yet the chambre of his paleis riche,
 Til that the Theban knightes bothe yliche
 Honoured were, and to the paleis fette.

Duk Theseus is at a window sette, 2530
 Araied right as he were a god in trone:
 The peple preseth thiderward ful sone
 Him for to seen, and don high reverence,
 And eke to herken his heste and his sentence.

An heraud on a scaffold made an o,
 Til that the noise of the peple was ydo:
 And whan he saw the peple of noise al still,
 Thus shewed he the mighty dukes will.

The lord hath of his high discretion
 Considered, that it were destruction 2540
 To gentil blood, to fighten in the gise
 Of mortal bataille now in this emprise:

Wherfore to shapen that they shul not die,
He wol his firste purpos modifie.

No man therfore, up peine of losse of lif,
No maner shot ne pollax, ne short knif
Into the listes send, or thider bring.
Ne short swerd for to stike with point biting
No man ne draw, ne bere it by his side.
Ne no man shal unto his felaw ride 2550
But o cours, with a sharpe ygrounden spere :
Foin if him list on foot, himself to were.
And he that is at meschief, shal be take,
And not slaine, but be brought unto the stake,
That shal ben ordeined on eyther side,
Thider he shal by force, and ther abide.
And if so fall, the chevetain be take
On eyther side, or elles sleth his make,
No longer shal the tourneying ylast.
God spede you ; goth forth and lay on fast. 2560
With longe swerd and with mase fighteth your fill.
Goth now your way ; this is the lordes will.

The vois of the peple touched to the heven,
So loude crieden they with mery steven :
God save swiche a lord that is so good,
He wilneth no destruction of blood.

Up gon the trompes and the melodie,
And to the listes rit the compaignie

By

THE KNIGHTES TALE 101

By ordinance, thurghout the cite large,
 Hanged with cloth of gold, and not with farge, 2570
 Ful like a lord this noble duk gan ride,
 And these two Thebans upon eyther side:
 And after rode the quene and Emelie,
 And after that another compaignie
 Of on and other, after hir degree.
 And thus they passen thurghout the citee,
 And to the listes comen they be time:
 It n'as not of the day yet fully prime.

Whan set was Theseus ful rich and hie,
 Ipolita the quene, and Emelie, 2580
 And other ladies in degrees aboute,
 Unto the fetes preseth all the route.
 And westward, thurgh the gates under Mart
 Arcite, and eke the hundred of his part,
 With baner red, is entred right anon:
 And in the selve moment Palamon
 Is, under Venus, estward in the place,
 With baner white, and hardy chere and face.
 In all the world, to seken up and doun,
 So even without variatioun 2590
 Ther n'ere fwiche compaignies never twey.
 For ther was non so wise that coude sey,
 That any hadde of other avantage
 Of worthinesse, ne of estat, ne age,

102 THE KNIGHTES TALE,

So even were they chosen for to gesse,
 And in two ringes fayre they hem dresse.
 Whan that hir names red were everich on,
 That in hir nombre gile were ther non,
 Tho were the gates shette, and cried was loude;
 Do now your devoir, yonge knightes proude. 2600

The heraudes left hir priking up and down.
 Now ringen trompes loud and clarioun.
 Ther is no more to say, but est and west
 In gon the speres fadly in the rest;
 In goth the sharpe spore into the fide.
 Ther see men who can iuste, and who can ride.
 Ther shiveren shaftes upon sheldes thicke;
 He feleth thurgh the herte sponne the pricke.
 Up springen speres twenty foot on highte;
 Out gon the swerdes as the silver brighte. 1610
 The helmes they to-hewen, and to-shrede;
 Out brest the blod, with sterne stremes rede.
 With mighty maces the bones they to-breste.
 He thurgh the thickest of the throng gan threste.
 Ther stomblen stedes strong, and down goth all.
 He rolleth under foot as doth a ball.
 He foineth on his foo with a tronchoun,
 And he him hurtleth with his hors adoun.
 He thurgh the body is hurt, and sith ytake
 Maugre his hed, and brought unto the stake, 2620

As

As forword was, right ther he must abide.

Another lad is on that other side.

And somtime doth hem Theseus to rest,
Hem to refresh, and drinken if hem lest.

Ful oft a day han thilke Thebanes two
Togeder met, and wrought eche other wo :
Unhorsed hath eche other of hem twey.
Ther n'as no tigre in the vale of Galaphey,
Whan that hire whelpe is stole, whan it is lite,
So cruel on the hunt, as is Arcite 2630
For jalous herte upon this Palamon :

Ne in Belmarie ther n'is so fell leon,
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
Ne of his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to sleen his foo Arcite.
The jalous strokes on hir helmes bite ;
Out renneth blood on both hir sides rede.

Somtime an ende ther is of every dede.
For er the sonne unto the reste went,
The stronge king Emetrius gan hent 2640
This Palamon, as he fought with Arcite,
And made his fwerd depe in his flesh to bite.
And by the force of twenty is he take
Unyolden, and ydrawen to the stake.
And in the rescous of this Palamon
The stronge king Licurge is borne adoun :

H 4

And

And king Emetrius for all his strengthe
 Is borne out of his fadel a swerdes lengthe,
 So hitte him Palamon or he were take :
 But all for nought, he was brought to the stake : 2650
 His hardy herte might him helpen naught,
 He moſte abiden, whan that he was caught,
 By force, and eke by composition.

Who forweth now but woful Palamon ?
 That moſte no more gon again to fight.
 And whan that Theſeus had ſeen that fight,
 Unto the folk that foughten thus eche on,
 He cried, ho ! no more, for it is don.
 I wol be trewe juge, and not partie.
 Arcite of Thebes ſhal have Emelie, 2660
 That by his fortune hath hire fayre ywonne.

Anon ther is a noiſe of peple begonne
 For joye of this, ſo loud and high withall,
 It ſemed that the liſtes ſhulden fall.

What can now fayre Venus don above ?
 What ſaith ſhe now ? what doth this quene of love ?
 But wepeth ſo, for wanting of hire will,
 Til that hire teres in the liſtes fill :
 She ſayde : I am aſhamed doutelees.

Saturnus ſayde : Daughter, hold thy pees. 2670
 Mars hath his will, his knight hath all his bone,
 And by min hed thou ſhalt ben eſed ſone.

The

The trompoures with the loude minftralcie,
 The heraudes, that so loude yell and crie,
 Ben in hir joye for wele of Dan Arcite.
 But herkeneth me, and stenteth noife a lite,
 Whiche a miracle ther befell anon.

This fierce Arcite hath of his helme ydon,
 And on a courser for to shew his face
 He priketh endelong the large place, 2680
 Loking upward upon this Emelie;
 And she again him cast a frendlich eye,
 (For women, as to speken in commune,
 They folwen all the favour of fortune)
 And was all his in chere, as his in herte.
 Out of the ground a fury infernal sterte,
 From Pluto sent, at requeste of Saturne,
 For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
 And lepte aside, and foundred as he lepe:
 And er that Arcite may take any kepe, 2690
 He pight him on the pomel of his hed,
 That in the place he lay as he were ded,
 His brest to-brosten with his fadel bow.
 As blake he lay as any cole or crow,
 So was the blood yronnen in his face.

Anon he was yborne out of the place
 With herte fore, to Theseus paleis.
 Tho was he corven out of his harneis,

And

And in a bed ybrought ful fayre and blive,
 For he was yet in memorie, and live, 2700
 And alway crying after Emelie.

Duk Theseus, with all his compaignie,
 Is comen home to Athenes his citee,
 With alle blisse and gret solempnite.
 Al be it that this aventure was falle,
 He n'olde not discomforten hem alle.
 Men sayden eke, that Arcite shal not die,
 He shal ben heled of his maladie.
 And of another thing they were as fayn,
 That of hem alle was ther non yslain, 2710
 Al were they fore yhurt, and namely on,
 That with a spere was thirled his brest bone.
 To other woundes, and to broken armes,
 Som hadden salves, and som hadden charmes :
 And fermacies of herbes, and eke save
 They drunken, for they wold hir lives have.
 For which this noble duk, as he wel can,
 Comforteth and honoureth every man,
 And made revel all the longe night,
 Unto the strange lordes, as was right, 2720
 Ne ther n'as holden no discomforting,
 But as at justes or a tourneying ;
 For sothly ther n'as no discomfiture,
 For falling n'is not but an aventure.

Ne to be lad by force unto a stake
 Unyolden, and with twenty knightes take,
 O perfon all alone, withouten mo,
 And haried forth by armes, foot, and too,
 And eke his ftede driven forth with staves,
 With footmen, bothe yemen and eke knaves, 2730
 It was aretted him no vilanie :

Ther may no man clepen it cowardie.
 For which anon duk Thefeus let crie,
 To ftenen alle rancour and envie,
 The gree as wel of o fide as of other,
 And eyther fide ylike, as others brother :
 And yave hem giftes after hir degree,
 And helde a fefte fully dayes three :
 And conveyed the kinges worthily
 Out of his toun a journee largely. 2740

And home went every man the righte way,
 Ther n'as no more, but farewel, have good day,
 Of this bataille I wol no more endite,
 But fpeke of Palamon and of Arcite.

Swellleth the brest of Arcite, and the fore
 Encrefeth at his herte more and more.
 The clotered blood, for any leche-craft
 Corruppeth, and is in his bouke ylaft,
 That neyther veine-blood, ne ventoufing,
 Ne drinke of herbes may ben his helping. 2750

The

The vertue expulfif, or animal,
 Fro thilke vertue cleped natural,
 Ne may the venime voiden, ne expell.
 The pipes of his longes gan to fwell,
 And every lacerte in his brest adoun
 Is fhent with venime and corruptioun,
 Him gaineth neyther, for to get his lif,
 Vomit upward, ne downward laxatif;
 All is to-broften thilke region;
 Nature hath now no domination. 2769
 And certainly ther nature wol not werche,
 Farewel phyfike; go bere the man to cherche,
 This is all and fom, that Arcite moſte die,
 For which he fendeth after Emelie,
 And Palamon, that was his cofin dere.
 Than fayd he thus, as ye fhuln after here.

Nought may the woful ſpirit in myn herte
 Declare o point of all my forwes ſmerte
 To you, my lady, that I love moſt;
 But I bequethe the ſervice of my goſt 2770
 To you aboven every creature,
 Sin that my lif ne may no lenger dure.

Alas the wo! alas the peines ſtrong,
 That I for you have ſuffered, and ſo longe!
 Alas the deth! alas min Emelie!
 Alas departing of our compaignie!

Alas min hertes quene ! alas my wif !
 Min hertes ladie, ender of my lif !
 What is this world ? what axen men to have ?
 Now with his love, now in his colde grave 2780
 Alone withouten any compaignie.
 Farewel my fwete, farewel min Emelie,
 And softe take me in your armes twey,
 For love of God, and herkeneth what I sey.

I have here with my cofin Palamon
 Had strif and rancour many a day agon
 For love of you, and for my jaloufie.
 And Jupiter so wis my soule gie,
 To speken of a fervant proprely,
 With alle circumftances trewely, 2790
 That is to fayn, trouth, honour, and knighthe,
 Wifdom, humbleffe, estat, and high kinrede,
 Fredom, and all that longeth to that art,
 So Jupiter have of my foule part,
 As in this world right now ne know I non,
 So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
 That ferveth you, and wol don all his lif,
 And if that ever ye fhall ben a wif,
 Foryete not Palamon, the gentil man.

And with that word his fpeche faille began. 2800
 For from his feet up to his brest was come
 The cold of deth, that had him overnome.

An

110 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

And yet moreover in his armes two
 The vital strength is lost, and all ago.
 Only the intellect, withouten more,
 That dwelled in his herte fike and fore,
 Gan faillen, whan the herte felte deth;
 Dusked his eyen two, and failled his breth.
 But on his ladie yet cast he his eye;
 His laste word was; Mercy, Emelie! 2810
 His spirit changed hous, and wente ther,
 As I came never I cannot tellen wher.
 Therefore I stent, I am no divinistre;
 Of soules find I not in this registre.
 Ne me lust not th' opinions to telle
 Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle,
 Arcite is cold, ther Mars his soule gie.
 Now wol I speken forth of Emelie.

Shright Emelie, and houleth Palamon,
 And Theseus his sifter toke anon 2820
 Swouning, and bare hire from the corps away.
 What helpeth it to tarien forth the day,
 To tellen how she wep both even and morwe?
 For in swiche cas wimmen have swiche sorwe,
 Whan that hir housbonds ben fro hem ago,
 That for the more part they forwen so,
 Or elles fallen in swiche maladie,
 That atte laste certainly they die,

Infinite

THE KNIGHTES TALE. iii

Infinite ben the forwes and the teres
 Of olde folk, and folk of tendre yeres, 2830
 In all the toun for deth of this Theban :
 For him ther wepeth bothe child and man.
 So gret a weping was ther non certain,
 Whan Hector was ybrought, all fresh yslain
 To Troy, alas ! the pitee that was there,
 Cratching of chekes, rending eke of here.
 Why woldest thou be ded ? thise women crie,
 And haddest gold ynough, and Emelie.

No man might gladen this duk Theseus,
 Saving his olde fader Egeus, 2840
 That knew this worldes transmutatioun,
 As he had seen it chaungen up and down,
 Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse ;
 And shewed him ensample and likenesse.

Right as ther died never man (quod he)
 That he ne lived in erth in som degree,
 Right so ther lived never man (he seyde)
 In all this world, that somtime he ne deyde.
 This world n'is but a thurghfare ful of wo,
 And we ben pilgrimes, passing to and fro : 2850
 Deth is an end of every worldes fore.

And over all this yet said he moche more
 To this effect, ful wisely to enhort
 The peple, that they shuld hem recomfort.

Duk

Duk Theseus with all his besy cure
 He casteth now, wher that the sepulture
 Of good Arcite may best ymaked be,
 And eke most honourable in his degree.
 And at the last he toke conclusion,
 That ther as first Arcite and Palamon 2860
 Hadden for love the bataille hem betwene,
 That in that selve grove, fote and grene,
 Ther as he hadde his amorous desires,
 His complaint, and for love his hote fires,
 He wolde make a fire, in which the office
 Of funeral he might all accomplise;
 And lete anon commande to hack and hewe
 The okes old, and lay hem on a rew
 In culpons, wel araied for to brenne.
 His officers with swifte feet they renne 2870
 And ride anon at his commandement.
 And after this, this Theseus hath sent
 After a bere, and it all overspradde
 With cloth of gold, the richeft that he hadde;
 And of the same fuit he cladde Arcite.
 Upon his hondes were his gloves white,
 Eke on his hed a croune of laurer grene,
 And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
 He laid him bare the visage on the bere,
 Therwith he wept that pitee was to here. 2880
 And

And for the peple shulde seen him alle,
 Whan it was day he brought him to the halle,
 That roreth of the crying and the soun.

Tho came this woful Theban Palamon
 With flotery berd, and ruggy-asfhy heres,
 In clothes blake, ydropped all with teres,
 And (passing over of weping Emelie)
 The reufullest of all the compaignie.

And in as much as the service shuld be
 The more noble and riche in his degree, 2890
 Duk Theseus let forth three stedes bring,
 That trapped were in stele all glittering,
 And covered with the armes of Dan Arcite.
 And eke upon these stedes gret and white
 Ther saten folk, of which on bare his sheld,
 Another his spere up in his hondes held;
 The thridde bare with him his bow Turkeis,
 Of brent gold was the cas and the harneis;
 And riden forth a pas with forweful chere
 Toward the grove, as ye shul after here. 2900

The noblest of the Grekes that ther were
 Upon hir shuldres carrieden the bere,
 With slacke pas, and eyen red and wete,
 Thurghout the citee, by the maister strete,
 That sprad was all with black, and wonder hie
 Right of the fame is all the strete ywrie.

Upon the right hand went olde Egeus,
 And on that other side duk Theseus,
 With vessels in hir hond of gold ful fine,
 All ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wine; 2910
 Eke Palamon, with ful gret compaignie :
 And after that came woful Emelie,
 With fire in hond, as was that time the gise,
 To don the office of funeral service.

High labour, and ful gret apparailing
 Was at the service of that fire making,
 That with his grene top the heven raught,
 And twenty fadom of brede the armes straught :
 This is to fain, the boughes were so brode.
 Of fire first ther was laied many a lode. 2920

But how the fire was makid up on highte,
 And eke the names how the trees highte,
 As oke, fir, birch, aspe, alder, holm, poplere,
 Wilow, elm, plane, ash, box, chestein, lind, laurere,
 Maple, thorn, beche, hasel, ew, whipultre,
 How they were feld, shal not be told for me ;
 Ne how the goddes rannen up and down
 Disherited of hir habitatioun,

In which they woneden in rest and pees,
 S Nimphes, ~~and~~ Faunes, and Amadriades ; 2930
 Ne how the bestes, and the briddes alle
 Fledden for fere, whan the wood gan falle ;

Ne

THE KNIGHTES TALE. 115

Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
 That was not wont to see the sonne bright;
 Ne how the fire was couched first with fire,
 And than with drie stickes cloven a-thre,
 And than with grene wood and spicerie,
 And than with cloth of gold and with perrie,
 And gerlonds hanging with ful many a flour,
 The mirre, th'encense also with swete odour; 2940
 Ne how Arcita lay among all this,
 Ne what richeffe about his body is;
 Ne how that Emelie, as was the gife,
 Put in the fire of funeral service;
 Ne how she swouned whan she made the fire,
 Ne what she spake, ne what was hire desire;
 Ne what jewelles men in the fire caste,
 Whan that the fire was gret and brente faste;
 Ne how som cast hir sheld, and som hir spere,
 And of hir vestimentes, which they were, 2950
 And cuppes full of wine, and milk, and blood,
 Into the fire, that brent as it were wood;
 Ne how the Grekes with a huge route
 Three times riden all the fite aboute
 Upon the left hond, with a loud shouting,
 And thries with hir speres clatering;
 And thries how the ladies gan to crie;
 Ne how that led was homeward Emelie;

116 THE KNIGHTES TALE.

Ne how Arcite is brent to ashen cold ;
 Ne how the liche-wake was yhold 2960
 All thilke night, ne how the Grekes play.
 The wake-plaies ne kepe I not to fay :
 Who wrestled best naked, with oile enoint,
 Ne who that bare him best in no disjoint.
 I woll not tellen eke how they all gon
 Home til Athenes whan the play is don ;
 But shortly to the point now wol I wende,
 And maken of my longe tale an ende.

By proceffe and by lengthe of certain yeres
 All stenten is the mourning and the teres 2970
 Of Grekes, by on general assent.
 Than semeth me ther was a parlement
 At Athenes, upon certain points and cas :
 Amonges the which points yspoken was
 To have with certain contrees alliance,
 And have of Thebanes fully obeisance.
 For which this noble Theseus anon
 Let senden after gentil Palamon,
 Unwist of him, what was the cause and why :
 But in his blacke clothes forwefully 2980
 He came at his commandement on hie ;
 Tho sente Theseus for Emelie.

Whan they were set, and husht was al the place,
 And Theseus abiden hath a space,

Or

Or any word came from his wife brest
 His eyen set he ther as was his left,
 And with a sad visage he fiked still,
 And after that right thus he sayd his will.

The firste mover of the cause above
 Whan he firste made the fayre chaine of love, 2990
 Gret was th'effect, and high was his entent ;
 Wel wist he why, and what therof he ment :
 For with that fayre chaine of love he bond
 The fire, the air, the watre, and the lond
 In certain bondes, that they may not flee :
 That same prince and mover eke (quod he)
 Hath stablisht, in this wretched world adoun,
 Certain of dayes and duration
 To all that are engendred in this place,
 Over the which day they ne mow not pace, 3000
 Al mow they yet the dayes wel abrege.
 Ther nedeth non autoritee allege,
 For it is preved by experience,
 But that me lust declaren my sentence.
 Than may men by this ordre wel discerne,
 That thilke mover stable is and eterne.
 Wel may men knowen, but it be a fool,
 That every part deriveth from his hool.
 For nature hath not taken his beginning
 Of no partie ne cantel of a thing, 3010

But of a thing that parfit is and stable,
 Descending so, til it be corruptable.
 And therefore of his wise purveyance
 He hath so wel beset his ordinance,
 That spesces of thinges and progressions
 Shullen enduren by successions,
 And not eterne, withouten any lie :
 This maiest thou understand and seen at eye.
 Lo the oke, that hath so long a norishing
 Fro the time that it ginneth first to spring, 3020
 And hath so long a lif, as ye may see,
 Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.
 Considereth eke, how that the harde stone
 Under our feet, on which we trede and gon,
 It wasteth, as it lieth by the wey.
 The brode river somtime wexeth drey.
 The grete tounes see we wane and wende.
 Than may ye see that all thing hath an ende,
 Of man and woman see we wel also,
 That nedes in on of the termes two, 3030
 That is to sayn, in youthe or elles age,
 He mote be ded, the king as shall a page ;
 Som in his bed, som in the depe see,
 Som in the large feld, as ye may see :
 Ther helpeth nought, all goth that ilke wey :
 Than may I sayn that alle thing mote dey.

What

THE KNIGHTES TALE. 119

What maketh this but Jupiter the king?
 The which is prince, and cause of alle thing,
 Converting alle unto his propre wille,
 From which it is derived, soth to telle. 3040
 And here-againes no creature on live
 Of no degree availleth for to strive.
 Than is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
 To maken vertue of necessite,
 And take it wel, that we may not eschewe,
 And namely that to us all is dewe.
 And who so grutcheth ought, he doth folie,
 And rebel is to him that all may gie.
 And certainly a man hath most honour
 To dien in his excellence and flour, 3050
 Whan he is fiker of his goode name.
 Than hath he don his frend, ne him, no shame;
 And glader ought his frend ben of his deth,
 Whan with honour is yolden up his breth,
 Than whan his name appalled is for age;
 For all foryetten is his vassallage.
 Than is it best, as for a worthy fame,
 To dien whan a man is best of name.
 The contrary of all this is wilfulnesse.
 Why grutchen we? why have we hevinesse, 3060
 That good Arcite, of chivalry the flour,
 Departed is, with dutee and honour,

Out of this foule prifon of this lif?
 Why grutchen here his cofin and his wif
 Of his welfare, that loven him fo wel?
 Can he hem thank? nay, God wet, never a del,
 That both his foule, and eke hemfelf offend,
 And yet they mow hir lufes not amend.

What may I conclude of this longe ferie,
 But after forwe I rede us to be merie, 3070
 And thanken Jupiter of all his grace.
 And er that we departen from this place,
 I rede that we make of forwes two
 O parfit joye lafting evermo:
 And loketh now wher moft forwe is herein,
 Ther wol I firfte amenden and begin.

Sifter, (quod he) this is my full affent,
 With all th'avis here of my parlement,
 That gentil Palamon, your owen knight,
 That ferveth you with will, and herte, and might,
 And ever hath don, fin ye firft him knew, 3081
 That ye fhall of your grace upon him rew,
 And taken him for hufbond and for lord:
 Lene me your hand, for this is oure accord.

Let fee now of your womanly pitee.
 He is a kinges brothers fone pardee,
 And though he were a poure bachelere,
 Sin he hath ferved you fo many a yere,

And

THE KNIGHTES TALE. 121

And had for you so gret adversite,
It moſte ben conſidered, leveth me. 3090
For gentil mercy oweth to paſſen right.

Than ſayd he thus to Palamon the knight;
I trow ther nedeth litel fermoning
To maken you aſſenten to this thing.
Cometh ner, and take your lady by the hond.

Betwixen hem was maked anon the bond,
That highte matrimoine or mariage,
By all the conſeil of the baronage.
And thus with alle bliſſe and melodie
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelie. 3100

And God that all this wide world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it dere ybought.
For now is Palamon in alle wele,
Living in bliſſe, in richeſſe, and in hele,
And Emelie him loveth ſo tendrely,
And he hire ſerveth al ſo gentilly,
That never was ther no word hem betwene
Of jalouſie, ne of non other tene.

Thus endeth Palamon and Emelie;
And God ſave all this fayre compaignie. 3110

THE MILLERES PROLOGUE.

WHAN that the Knight had thus his tale told,
In all the compaignie n'as ther yong ne old,
That

122 THE MILLERES PROLOGUE.

That he ne faid it was a noble storie,
 And worthy to be drawn to memorie;
 And namely the gentiles everich on.
 Our Hofte lough and swore, So mote I gon,
 This goth aright; unboked is the male;
 Let see now who shal tel another tale:
 For trewely this game is wel begonne.
 Now telleth ye, sire Monk, if that ye conne, 3129
 Somwhat, to quiten with the knightes tale.

The Miller that for-dronken was all pale,
 So that unnethes upon his hors he fat,
 He n'old avalen neither hood ne hat,
 Ne abiden no man for his curtesie,
 But in Pilates vois he gan to crie,
 And swore by armes, and by blood, and bones,
 I can a noble tale for the nones,
 With which I wol now quite the knightes tale.

Our Hofte saw that he was dronken of ale, 3130
 And sayd; abide, Robin, my leve brother,
 Som better man shall tell us first another:
 Abide, and let us werken thriftily.

By Goddes soule (quod he) that wol not I,
 For I wol speke, or elles go my way.

Our Hofte answerd; Tell on a devil way;
 Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome.

Now herkeneth, quod the Miller, all and some;

But

THE MILLERES PROLOGUE. 123

But first I make a protestatioun,
That I am dronke, I know it by my soun : 3140
And therfore if that I mispeke or say,
Wite it the ale of Southwerk, I you pray ;
For I wol tell a legend and a lif
Both of a carpenter and of his wif,
How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe.

The Reve answerd and saide, Stint thy clappe.
Let be thy lewed drunken harlotrie,
It is a finne, and eke a gret folie
To apeiren any man, or him defame,
And eke to bringen wives in swiche a name. 3150
Thou mayst ynough of other thinges fain.

This drunken Miller spake ful sone again,
And sayde ; Leve brother Ofewold,
Who hath no wif, he is no cokewold.
But I say not therfore that thou art on ;
Ther ben ful goode wives many on.
Why art thou angry with my tale now ?
I have a wif parde as wel as thou,
Yet n'olde I, for the oxen in my plough,
Taken upon me more than ynough 3160
As demen of myself that I am on ;
I wol beleven wel that I am non.
An husbond shuld not ben inquisitif
Of Goddes privite, ne of his wif.

So

124 THE MILLERES PROLOGUE.

So he may finden Goddes foison there,
Of the remenant nedeth not to enquere.

What shuld I more fay, but this Millere
He n'olde his wordes for no man forbere,
But told his cherles tale in his manere,
Me thinketh, that I shal reherse it here. 3170
And therfore every gentil wight I pray,
For Goddes love as deme not that I fay
Of evil entent, but that I mote reherse
Hir tales alle, al be they better or werse,
Or elles falsen som of my matere.
And therfore who so list it not to here,
Turne over the leef, and chese another tale,
For he shal find ynow bothe gret and smale,
Of storial thing that toucheth gentilleffe,
And eke moralite, and holinesse. 3180
Blameth not me, if that ye chese amis.
The Miller is a cherl, ye know wel this,
So was the Reve, (and many other mo)
And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.
Aviseþ you now, and put me out of blame;
And eke men shuld not make ernest of game.

THE MILLERES TALE.

WHILOM ther was dwelling in Oxenforde
A riche gnos, that gestes helde to borde,

And

And of his craft he was a carpenter.
 With him ther was dwelling a poure scoler, 3190
 Had lerned art, but all his fantasie
 Was turned for to lerne astrologie,
 And coude a certain of conclusions
 To demen by interrogations,
 If that men asked him in certain houres,
 Whan that men shulde have drouht or elles shoures :
 Or if men asked him what shulde falle
 Of every thing, I may not reken alle.

This clerk was cleped hendy Nicholas ;
 Of derne love he coude and of solas ; 3200
 And therto he was flie and ful prive,
 And like a maiden meke for to fe.
 A chambre had he in that hostelrye
 Alone, withouten any compaignie,
 Ful fetisly ydight with herbes sote,
 And he himself was swete as is the rote
 Of licoris, or any fetewale.
 His almageste, and bokes gret and finale,
 His astrelabre, longing for his art,
 His augrim stonys, layen faire apart 3210
 On shelves couched at his beddes hed,
 His presse ycovered with a falding red.
 And all above ther lay a gay fautrie,
 On which he made on nightes melodie,

So

126 THE MILLER'S TALE.

So swetely, that all the chambre rong :
 And *Angelus ad virginem* he song.
 And after that he song the kinges note ;
 Ful often blessed was his mery throte.
 And thus this swete clerk his time spent
 After his frendes finding and his rent. 3220

This carpenter had wedded new a wif,
 Which that he loved more than his lif :
 Of eightene yere she was I gesse of age.
 Jalous he was, and held hire narwe in cage,
 For she was wild and yonge, and he was old,
 And demed himself belike a cokewold.
 He knew not Caton, for his wit was rude,
 That bade a man shulde wedde his similitude.
 Men shulden wedden after hir estate,
 For youthe and elde is often at debate. 3230
 But fithen he was fallen in the snare,
 He most endure (as other folk) his care.

Fayre was this yonge wif, and therwithal
 As any wessel hire body gent and smal.
 A feint she wered, barred all of filk,
 A barme-cloth eke as white as morwe milk
 Upon hire lendes, ful of many a gore.
 White was hire smok, and brouded all before
 And eke behind on hire colere aboute
 Of cole-black filk, within and eke withoute. 3240
 The

The tapes of hire white volupere
 Were of the same suit of hire colere;
 Hire fillet brode of filk, and set full hye:
 And fikerly she had a likerous eye.
 Ful smal ypullled were hire browes two,
 And they were bent, and black as any flo.
 She was wel more blisful for to see
 Than is the newe perienete tree;
 And softer than the wolfe is of a wether.

And by hire girdel heng a purse of lether, 325^o
 Tasseled with filk, and perled with latoun.

In all this world to seken up and doun
 Ther n'is no man so wise, that coude thenche
 So gay a popelot, or swiche a wenche.
 Ful brighter was the shining of hire hewe,
 Than in the tour the noble yforged newe.
 But of hire song, it was as loud and yerne,
 As any swalow sitting on a berne.

Therto she coude skip, and make a game,
 As any kid or calf folowing his dame. 326^o

Hire mouth was swete as braket or the meth,
 Or hord of apples, laid in hay or heth.

Wynfing she was, as is a joly colt,
 Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
 A broche she bare upon hire low colere,
 As brode as is the bosse of a bokelere.

Hire

128 THE MILLERES TALE.

Hire shoon were laced on hire legges hie ;
 She was a primerole, a piggesnie,
 For any lord to liggen in his bedde,
 Or yet for any good yeman to wedde. 3270

Now fire, and eft fire, so befell the cas,
 That on a day this hendy Nicholas
 Fel with this yonge wif to rage and pleye,
 While that hire husbond was at Ofeney,
 As clerkes ben ful subtil and ful queint.
 And prively he caught hire by the queint;
 And sayde ; Ywis, but if I have my will,
 For derne love of thee, lemman, I spill.
 And helde hire faste by the hanche bones,
 And sayde ; Lemman, love me wel at ones, 3280
 Or I wol dien, al so God me save.

And she sprong as a colt doth in the trave :
 And with hire hed she writhed faste away,
 And sayde ; I wol not kisse thee by my fay.
 Why let be, (quod she) let be, Nicholas,
 Or I wol crie out harow and alas.
 Do way your hondes for your curtesie.

This Nicholas gan mercy for to crie,
 And spake so faire, and profered him so fast,
 That she hire love him granted at the last, 3290
 And swore hire oth by Seint Thomas of Kent,
 That she wold ben at his commandement,

Whan

Whan that she may hire leiser wel espie.
 Myn husbond is so ful of jalousie,
 That but ye waiten wel, and be prive,
 I wot right wel I n'am but ded, quod she:
 Ye mosten be ful derre as in this cas.

Nay, therof care you not, quod Nicholas:
 A clerk had litherly beset his while,
 But if he coude a carpenter begile.

3300

And thus they were accorded and ysworne
 To waite a time, as I have said beforne.
 Whan Nicholas had don thus every del,
 And thacked hire about the lendes wel,
 He kissed hire swete, and taketh his sautrie,
 And plaieth fast, and maketh melodie.

Than fell it thus, that to the parish cherche
 (Of Cristes owen werkes for to werchie)

This good wif went upon a holy day:
 Hire forehed shone as bright as any day,
 So was it washen, whan she lete hire werk.

3310

Now was ther of that chirche a parish clerk,
 The which that was ycleped Absolon.
 Crulle was his here, and as the gold it shon,
 And strouted as a fanne large and brode;
 Ful streight and even lay his joly shode.
 His rode was red, his eyen grey as goos,
 With Poulés windowes corven on his shoos.

In hosen red he went ful fetisly.

Yclad he was ful smal and proprely,

3320

All in a kirtel of a light waget ;

Ful faire and thicke ben the pointes fet.

And therupon he had a gay furplife,

As white as is the blosme upon the rise.

A mery child he was, so God me save ;

Wel coud he leten blod, and clippe, and shave,

And make a chartre of lond, and a quittance.

In twenty manere coud he trip and dance,

(After the scole of Oxenforde tho)

And with his legges casten to and fro ;

3330

And playen songes on a smal ribible ;

Therto he song somtime a loud quible.

And as wel coud he play on a giterne.

In all the toun n'as brewhous ne tavern,

That he ne visited with his solas,

Ther as that any gaillard tapstere was.

But soth to say he was somdel squaimous

Of farting, and of speche dangerous.

This Absolon, that joly was and gay,

Goth with a censer on the holy day,

3340

Censing the wives of the parish faste ;

And many a lovely loke he on hem caste,

And namely on this carpenteres wif :

To loke on hire him thought a mery lif.

She

THE MILLER'S TALE. 131

She was so propre, and swete, and likerous.
I dare wel fain, if she had ben a mous,
And he a cat, he wolde hire hente anon.

This parish clerk, this joly Absolon,
Hath in his herte swiche a love longing,
That of no wif toke he non offering; 3350
For curtesie, he sayd, he n'olde non.

The moone at night ful clere and brighte shon,
And Absolon his giterne hath ytake,
For paramours he thoughte for to wake.
And forth he goth, jolif and amorous,
Til he came to the carpenteres hous,
A litel after the cockes had ycrow,
And dressed him up by a shot window,
That was upon the carpenteres wal.
He singeth in his vois gentil and final; 3360
Now, dere lady,—if thy wille be,
I pray you that ye—wol rewe on me;
Ful wel accordant to his giterning.

This carpenter awoke, and herd him sing,
And spake unto his wif, and said anon,
What, Alifon, heres thou not Absolon,
That chanteth thus under our boures wal?
And she answerd hire husbond therewithal;
Yes, God wot, John, I here him every del. 3369
This passeth forth; what wol ye bet than wel?

Fro day to day this joly Abfolon
 So loveth hire, that him is wo-begon.
 He waketh all the night, and all the day,
 He kembeth his lockes brode, and made him gay.
 He woeth hire by menes and brocage,
 And swore he wolde ben hire owen page.
 He fingeth brokking as a nightingale.
 He fent hire pinnes, methe, and spiced ale,
 And wafres piping hot out of the glede :
 And for she was of toun, he profered mede. 3386
 For som folk wol be wonnen for richeffe,
 And som for strokes, and som with gentilleffe.

Somtime to shew his lightnesse and maistris

He plaieth Herode on a skaffold hie.
 But what availeth him as in this cas ?
 So loveth she this hendy Nicholas,
 That Abfolon may blow the buckes horne :
 He ne had for his labour but a scorne.
 And thus she maketh Abfolon hire ape,
 And all his ernest tourneth to a jape. 3390
 Ful soth is this proverbe, it is no lie ;
 Men fay right thus alway ; the neighe flie
 Maketh oft time the fer leef to be lothe.
 For though that Abfolon be wood or wrothe,
 Because that he fer was from hire fight,
 This neighe Nicholas stood in his light.

Now

THE MILLERES TALE. 133

Now bere thee wel, thou hendy Nicholas,
For Abfolon may waile and fmg alas.

And fo befell that on a Saturday,
This carpenter was gon to Ofenay, 3400
And hendy Nicholas and Alifon
Accorded ben to this conclufion,
That Nicholas fhall fhapen him a wile
This fely jalous hufbond to begile ;
And if fo were the game went aright,
She fhuld flepe in his armes alle night,
For this was hire defire and his alfo.

And right anon, withouten wordes mo,
This Nicholas no lenger wolde tarie,
But doth ful foft unto his chambre carie 3410
Both mete and drinke for a day or twey.

And to hire hufbond bad hire for to fey,
If that he axed after Nicholas,
She fhulde fay, ſhe n'ifte not wher he was ;
Of all the day ſhe ſaw him not with eye,
She trowed he was in ſom maladie,
For for no crie hire maiden coud him calle
He n'olde answer, for nothing that might falle,

Thus paſſeth forth all thilke Saturday,
That Nicholas ſtill in his chambre lay, 3420
And ete, and flept, and dide what him liſt
Til Sonday, that the ſonne goth to reſt,

This fely carpenter hath gret mervaile
 Of Nicholas, or what thing might him aile,
 And said; I am adrad by Seint Thomas
 It stondeth not aright with Nicholas;
 God shilde that he died sodenly.
 This world is now ful tikel fikerly.
 I saw to-day a corps yborne to cherche,
 That now on Monday last I saw him werche. 3430

Go up (quod he unto his knave) anon;
 Clepe at his dore, or knocke with a ston:
 Loke how it is, and tell me boldely.

This knave goth him up ful sturdely,
 And at the chambre dore while that he stood,
 He cried and knocked as that he were wood:
 What how? what do ye, maister Nicholay?
 How may ye slepen all the longe day?
 But all for nought, he herde not a word.
 An hole he fond ful low upon the bord, 3440
 Ther as the cat was wont in for to crepe,
 And at that hole he looked in ful depe,
 And at the last he had of him a sight.

This Nicholas sat ever gaping upright,
 As he had kyked on the newe mone.

Adoun he goth, and telleth his maister sone,
 In what array he saw this ilke man.

This carpenter to blissen him began,

And

THE MILLERES TALE. 135

And said; Now helpe us Seinte Fridefwide.
A man wote litel what shal him betide. 3450

This man is fallen with his astronomie
In som woodnesse or in som agonie.
I thought ay wel how that it shulde be.
Men shulde not knowe of Goddes privetee.
Ya blessed be alway a lewed man,
That nought but only his beleve can.
So ferd another clerk with astronomie;
He walked in the feldes for to prie
Upon the sterres, what ther shuld befall,
Til he was in a marlepit yfalle. 3460

He saw not that. but yet by Seint Thomas
Me reweth fore of hendy Nicholas :
He shal be rated of his studying,
If that I may, by Jesus heven king.

Get me a staf, that I may underspore
While that thou, Robin, hevest of the dore :
He shal out of his studying, as I gesse.
And to the chambre dore he gan him dresse.
His knave was a strong carl for the nones,
And by the haspe he haf it of at ones ; 347
Into the flore the dore fell anon.

This Nicholas sat ay as stille as ston,
And ever he gaped upward into the eire.

This carpenter wend he were in despeire,

K 4

And

136 THE MILLERES TALE.

And hent him by the shulders mightily,
And shoke him hard, and cried spitously;
What, Nicholas? what how man? loke adoun:
Awake, and thinke on Cristes passioun.

I crouche thee from elves, and from wightes.
Therwith the nightspel said he anon rightes, 3480
On foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the threswold of the dore withoute.
Jesu Crist, and Seint Benedight,
Blisse this hous from every wicked wight,
Fro the nightes mare, the wite Pater-noster;
Wher wonest thou Seint Peters suster?

And at the last this hendy Nicholas
Gan for to fiken fore, and said; Alas!
Shal all the world be lost estsones now?

This carpenter answered; What saiest thou? 3490
What? thinke on God, as we do, men that swinke.

This Nicholas answered; Fetch me a drinke;
And after wol I speke in privetee
Of certain thing that toucheth thee and me:
I wol tell it non other man certain.

This carpenter goth down, and cometh again,
And brought of mighty ale a large quart;
And whan that eche of hem had dronken his part,
This Nicholas his dore faste shette,
And down the carpenter by him he sette, 3500
And

And faide; John, min hofte lefe and dere,
 Thou fhalt upon thy trouthe fwere me here,
 That to no wight thou fhalt my confeil wrey:
 For it is Cristes confeil that I fay,
 And if thou tell it man, thou art forlore:
 For this vengeance thou fhalt have therfore,
 That if thou wreye me, thou fhalt be wood.

Nay, Crist forbede it for his holy blood,
 Quod tho this fely man; I am no labbe,
 Ne though I fay it, I n'am not lefe to gabbe. 3510
 Say what thou wolt, I shal it never telle
 To child ne wif, by him that harwed helle.

Now, John, (quod Nicholas) I wol not lie,
 I have yfounde in min astrologie,
 As I have loked in the moone bright,
 That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
 Shal fall a rain, and that fo wild and wood
 That half fo gret was never Noes flood.
 This world (he faid) in leffe than in an houre
 Shal all be dreint, fo hidous is the shoure: 3520
 Thus shal mankinde drenche, and lefe hir lif.

This carpenter answerd; Alas my wif!
 And shal she drenche? alas min Alifoun!
 For sorwe of this he fell almost adoun,
 And faid; Is ther no remedy in this cas?
 Why yes, for God, quod hendy Nicholas;

If

If thou wolt werken after lore and rede ;
 Thou maist not werken after thin owen hede.
 For thus saith Salomon, that was ful trewe ;
 Werke all by conseil, and thou shalt not rewe. 3530
 And if thou werken wolt by good conseil,
 I undertake, withouten mast or seyl,
 Yet shal I saven hire, and thee and me.
 Hast thou not herd how saved was Noe,
 Whan that our Lord had warned him beforne,
 That al the world with water shuld be lorne ?
 Yes, (quod this carpenter) ful yore ago.
 Hast thou not herd (quod Nicholas) also
 The sorwe of Noe with his felawship,
 Or that he mighte get his wif to ship ? 3540
 Him had be lever, I dare wel undertake,
 At thilke time, than all his wethers blake,
 That she had had a ship hire self alone.
 And therefore wost thou what is best to done ?
 This axeth hast, and of an hastif thing
 Men may not preche and maken taryng.
 Anon go get us fast into this in
 A kneding trough or elles a kemelyn,
 For eche of us ; but loke that they ben large,
 In which we mowen swimme as in a barge : 3550
 And have therin vitaille suffisant
 But for a day ; fie on the remenant ;

The water shall aflake and gon away
 Abouten prime upon the nexte day.
 But Robin may not wete of this, thy knave,
 Ne eke thy mayden Gille I may not save :
 Axe not why : for though thou axe me,
 I wol not tellen Goddes privetee.
 Sufficeth thee, but if thy wittes madde,
 To have as gret a grace as Noe hadde. 3560
 Thy wif shal I wel saven out of doute.
 Go now thy way, and spede thee hereabout.

But whan thou hast for hire, and thee, and me,
 Ygeten us these kneding tubbes thre,
 Than shalt thou hang hem in the roofe ful hie,
 That no man of our purveyance espie :
 And whan thou hast don thus as I have said,
 And hast our vitaille faire in hem ylaid,
 And eke an axe to finite the cord a-two
 Whan that the water cometh, that we may go, 3570
 And breke an hole on high upon the gable
 Unto the gardin ward, over the stable,
 That we may frely passen forth our way,
 Whan that the grete shoure is gon away.
 Than shal thou swim as mery, I undertake,
 As doth the white doke after hire drake :
 Than wol I clepe, How Alifon, how John,
 Be mery : for the flood wol passe anon.

And

And thou wolt fain, Haile maister Nicholay,
Good morwe, I see thee wel, for it is day. 3580

And than shal we be lordes all our lif
Of all the world, as Noe and his wif.
But of o thing I warne thee ful right,
Be wel avised on that ilke night,
That we ben entred into shippes bord,
That non of us ne speke not o word,
Ne clepe ne crie, but be in his praiere,
For it is Goddes owen heste dere.

Thy wif and thou moste hangen fer a-twinne,
For that betwixen you shal be no sinne, 3590

No more in loking than ther shal in dede.
This ordinance is said; go, God thee spede.
To morwe at night, whan men ben all aslepe,

Into our kneding tubbes wol we crepe,
And sitten ther, abiding Goddes grace.

Go now thy way, I have no lenger space
To make of this no lenger sermoning :

Men fain thus : send the wise, and say nothing ;
Thou art so wise, it nedeth thee nought teche.

Go, save our lives, and that I thee besече. 3600

This sely carpenter goth forth his way,
Ful oft he said alas, and wala wa,

And to his wif he told his privetee,

And she was ware, and knew it bet than he

What

What all this queinte cast was for to fey.

But natheles she ferde as she wold dey,

And said; Alas! go forth thy way anon.

Helpe us to scape, or we be ded eche on.

I am thy trewe veray wedded wif;

Go, dere spouse, and helpe to save our lif. 3610

Lo, what a gret thing is affection,

Men may die of imagination,

So depe may impressioun be take.

This sely carpenter beginneth quake:

Him thinketh veraily that he may see

Noes flood comen walwing as the see

To drenchen Alifon, his hony dere.

He wepeth, waileth, maketh sory chere;

He siketh, with ful many a sory swough.

He goth, and geteth him a kneding trough, 3620

And after a tubbe, and a kemelin,

And prively he sent hem to his in:

And heng hem in the roof in privetee.

His owen hond than made he ladders three,

To climben by the renges and the stalkes

Unto the tubbes honging in the balkes;

And hem vitailled, kemelin, trough and tubbe,

With bred and chese, and good ale in a jubbe,

Sufficing right ynow as for a day.

But er that he had made all this array, 3630

He

He sent his knave, and eke his wenche also
 Upon his nede to London for to go.
 And on the Monday, whan it drew to night,
 He shette his dore, withouten candel light,
 And dressed all thing as it shulde bee.
 And shortly up they clomben alle three.
 They fitten stille wel a furlong way.
 Now, *Pater noster*, clum, said Nicholay,
 And clum, quod John, and clum, said Alifon:
 This carpenter said his devotion, 3640
 And still he sit, and biddeth his praier,
 Awaiting on the rain, if he it here.

The dede flepe, for wery befinesse,
 Fell on this carpenter, right as I gesse,
 Abouten curfew time, or litel more.
 For travaille of his goft he groneth fore,
 And eft he routeth, for his hed mislay.
 Doun of the ladder staketh Nicholay,
 And Alifon ful soft adoun hire spedde.
 Withouten wordes mo they went to bedde, 3650
 Ther as the carpenter was wont to lie;
 Ther was the revel, and the melodie.
 And thus lith Alifon, and Nicholas,
 In befinesse of mirth and in folas,
 Til that the bell of *laudes* gan to ring,
 And freres in the chancel gon to sing.

This

THE MILLERES TALE. 143

This parifh clerk, this amorous Abfolon,
 That is for love alway fo wo-begon,
 Upon the Monday was at Ofenay
 With compaignie, him to difport and play; 3660
 And asked upon cas a cloifterer
 Ful prively after John the carpenter;
 And he drew him apart out of the chirche.
 He faid, I n'ot; I faw him not here wirche
 Sith Saturday; I trow that he be went
 For timbre, ther our abbot hath him fent.
 For he is wont for timbre for to go,
 And dwellen at the Grange a day or two:
 Or elles he is at his hous certain.

Wher that he be, I cannot fothly fain. 3670

This Abfolon ful joly was and light,
 And thoughte, now is time to wake al night,
 For fikerly, I faw him nat ftiring
 About his dore, fin day began to fpring.
 So mote I thrive, I fhall at cockes crow
 Ful prively go knocke at his window,
 That ftant ful low upon his boures wall:
 To Alifon wol I now tellen all
 My love longing; for yet I fhall not miffe,
 That at the lefte way I fhall hire kiffe. 3680
 Some maner comfort fhall I have parfay,
 My mouth hath itched all this longe day:

That

That is a signe of kissing at the leste.
 All night me mette eke, I was at a feste.
 Therfore I wol go slepe an houre or twey,
 And all the night than wol I wake and pley.

Whan that the firste cock hath crowe anon
 Up rift this joly lover Absolon,
 And him arayeth gay, at point devise.
 But first he cheweth grein and licorise, 3696
 To smellen sote, or he had spoke with here.
 Under his tonge a trewe love he bere,
 For therby wend he to ben gracious.
 He cometh to the carpenteres hous,
 And still he stant under the shot window;
 Unto his brest it raught, it was so low;
 And soft he cougheth with a semifoun.

What do ye honnycombe, swete Alisoun?
 My faire bird, my swete finamome,
 Awaketh, lemman min, and speketh to me. 3706
 Ful litel thinken ye upon my wo,
 That for your love I swete ther as I go.
 No wonder is though that I swelte and swete.
 I mourne as doth a lamb after the tete.
 Ywis, lemman, I have swiche love longing,
 That like a turtel trewe is my mourning.
 I may not ete no more than a maid.

Go fro the window, jacke fool, she said:

As helpe me God, it wol not be, compame.
 I love another, or elles I were to blame, 3710
 Wel bet than thee by Jesu, Absolon,
 Go forth thy way, or I wol cast a ston;
 And let me slepe; a twenty divel way.

Alas! (quod Absolon) and wala wa!
 That trewe love was ever so yvel besette:
 Than kisse me, sin that it may be no bette,
 For Jesus love, and for the love of me.

Wilt thou than go thy way therwith? quod she.
 Ya certes, leimman, quod this Absolon.
 Than make thee redy, (quod she) I come anon. 3720

This Absolon doun set him on his knees,
 And faide; I am a lord at all degrees:
 For after this I hope ther cometh more;
 Leimman, thy grace, and, swete bird, thyn ore.

The window she undoth, and that in haste.
 Have don, (quod she) come of, and spede thee faste,
 Lest that our neigheboures thee espie.

This Absolon gan wipe his mouth ful drie.
 Derke was the night, as pitch or as the cole,
 And at the window she put out hire hole, 3730
 And Absolon him felle ne bet ne wers,
 But with his mouth he kist hire naked ers
 Ful favorly, er he was ware of this.

Abak he sterte, and thought it was amis,

For wel he wist a woman hath no berd.
 He felt a thing all rowe, and long yherd,
 And saide; fy, alas! what have I do?

Te he, quod she, and clapt the window to;
 And Abfolon goth forth a sory pas.

A berd, a berd, said hendy Nicholas; 3740
 By goddes *corpas*, this goth faire and wel.

This sely Abfolon herd every del,
 And on his lippe he gan for anger bite;
 And to himself he said, I shal thee quite,
 Who rubbeth now, who froteth now his lippes
 With dust, with sond, with straw, with cloth, with
 But Abfolon? that saith full oft, alas! [chippes,
 My soule betake I unto Sathanas,
 But me were lever than all this toun (quod he)
 Of this despit awroken for to be. 3750

Alas! alas! that I ne had yblent.
 His hote love is cold, and all yqueint.
 For fro that time that he had kist hire ers,
 Of paramours ne raught he not a kers,
 For he was heled of his maladie;
 Ful often paramours he gan defie,
 And wepe as doth a child that is ybete.
 A softe pas he went him over the strete
 Until a smith, men callen dan Gerveis,
 That in his forge finithed plow-harneis; 3760

He

He sharpeth share and cultre besily.

This Absolon knocketh all esily,
And said; Undo, Gerveis, and that anon.

What, who art thou? It am I Absolon.
What? Absolon, what? Cristes swete tre,
Why rise ye so rath? ey *benedicite*,
What eileth you? some gay girle, God it wote,
Hath brought you thus upon the viretote:
By Seint Neote, ye wote wel what I mene.

This Absolon ne raughte not a bene 3770
Of all his play, no word again he yaf.
He hadde more tawe on his distaf
Than Gerveis knew, and faide; Frend so dere,
That hote culter in the cheminee here
As lene it me, I have therwith to don:
I wol it bring again to thee ful sone.

Gerveis answered; Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke nobles all untold,
Thou shuldest it have, as I am trewe finith.
Ey, Cristes foot, what wol ye don therwith? 3780
Therof, quod Absolon, be as be may;
I shal wel tellen thee another day:
And caught the culter by the colde stele.
Ful soft out at the dore he gan to stele,
And went unto the carpenteres wall.
He coughed first, and knocked therwithall

Upon the window, right as he did er.

This Alifon answered ; Who is ther
That knocketh so ? I warrant him a thefe.

Nay, nay, (quod he) God wot, my swete lefe, 3790
I am thin Abfolon, thy dereling.

Of gold (quod he) I have thee brought a ring,
My mother yave it me, fo God me fave,
Ful fine it is, and therto wel ygrave :
This wol I yeven thee, if thou me kiffe.

This Nicholas was rifen for to piffe,
And thought he wolde amenden all the jape,
He fhulde kiffe his ers er that he fcape :
And up the window did he haftily,
And out his ers he putteth prively 3800
Over the buttok, to the hanche bon.
And therwith fpake this clerk, this Abfolon,
Speke fwete bird, I n'ot not wher thou art.

This Nicholas anon let fleen a fart,
As gret as it had ben a thonder dint,
That with the ftroke he was wel nie yblint :
And he was redy with his yren hote,
And Nicholas amid the ers he finote.

Off goth the fkinne an hondbrede al aboute.
The hote culter brenned fo his toute, 3810
That for the finert he wened for to die ;
As he were wood, for wo he gan to crie,

Help,

Help, water, water, help for Goddes herte.

This carpenter out of his slomber ferte,
And herd on crie water, as he were wood,
And thought, alas, now cometh Noes flood.
He set him up withouten wordes mo,
And with his axe he finote the cord atwo;
And doun goth all; he fond neyther to felle
Ne breed ne ale, til he came to the felle,
Upon the flore, and ther aswoune he lay,

3820

Up sterten Alifon and Nicholay,
And crieden, out and harow! in the strete.

The neigheboures bothe finale and grete
In rannen, for to gauren on this man,
That yet aswoune lay, bothe pale and wan:
For with the fall he brosten hath his arm.
But stonden he must unto his owen harm,
For whan he spake, he was anon bore doun
With hendy Nicholas and Alifoun.

3830

They tolden every man that he was wood;
He was agaste so of Noes flood
Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanitee
He had ybought him kneding tubbes three,
And had hem honged in the roof above;
And that he praied hem for Goddes loye
To sitten in the roof *par compaignie*.

The folk gan laughen at his fantasie.

150 THE MILLERES TALE.

Into the roof they kyken, and they gape,
 And turned all his harm into a jape. 3840
 For what so that this carpenter answerd,
 It was for nought, no man his reson herd.
 With othes gret, he was so sworne adoun,
 That he was holden wood in all the toun.
 For everich clerk anon right held with other;
 They said, the man was wood, my leve brother;
 And every wight gan laughen at this strif.
 Thus swived was the carpenteres wif,
 For all his keping, and his jalousie;
 And Absolon hath kist hire nether eye; 3850
 And Nicholas is scalded in the toute.
 This tale is don, and God save all the route.

THE REVES PROLOGUE.

WHAN folk han laughed at this nice cas
 Of Absolon and hendy Nicholas,
 Diverse folk diversely they faide,
 But for the more part they lought and plaide;
 Ne at this tale I saw no man him greve,
 But it were only Osfild the Reve.
 Because he was of carpenteres craft,
 A litel ire is in his herte ylast;
 He gan to grutch and blamen it a lite.
 So the ik, quod he, ful wel coude I him quite
 With

THE REVES PROLOGUE. 151

With blering of a proude milleres eye,
 If that me list to speke of ribaudrie.
 But ik am olde; me list not play for age;
 Gras time is don, my foddre is now forage.
 This white top writeth min olde yeres;
 Min herte is also mouled as min heres;
 But if I fare as doth an open ers;
 That ilke fruit is ever lenger the wers, 3170
 Til it be roten in mullok, or in stre.

We olde men, I drede, so faren we,
 Til we be roten can we not be ripe;
 We hoppe alway, while that the world wol pipe;
 For in our will ther stiketh ever a nayl,
 To have an hore hed and a grene tayl,
 As hath a leke; for though our might be gon,
 Our will desireth folly ever in on:
 For whan we may not don, than wol we speken,
 Yet in our ashen cold is fire yreken. 3180

Foure gledes han we, which I shal devise,
 Avaunting, lying, anger, and covetise.
 These foure sparkes longen unto elde.
 Our olde limes mow wel ben unwelde,
 But will ne shal not faillen, that is sothe.
 And yet have I alway a coltes tothe,
 As many a yere as it is passed henne,
 Sin that my tappe of lif began to renne.

152 THE REVES PROLOGUE

For fikerly, whan I was borne, anon
 Deth drow the tappe of lif, and let it gon : 3890
 And ever sith hath so the tappe yronne,
 Til that almost all empty is the tonne.
 The streame of lif now droppeth on the chimbe.
 The sely tonge may wel ringe and chimbe
 Of wretchednesse, that passed is ful yore :
 With olde folk, save dotage, is no more.

Whan that our Hoste had herd this sermoning,
 He gan to speke as lordly as a king,
 And sayde ; What amounteth all this wit ?
 What ? shall we speke all day of holy writ ? 3900
 The diuel made a Reve for to preche,
 Or of a fouter a shipman, or a leche.

Say forth thy tale, and tary not the time :
 Lo Depeford, and it is half way prime :
 Lo Grenewich, ther many a shrew is inne.
 It were al time thy tale to beginne.

Now, fires, quod this Osewold the Reve,
 I pray you alle, that ye not you greve,
 Though I answere, and somdel set his howve,
 For lesful is with force force off to showve. 3910

This dronken Miller hath ytold us here,
 How that begiled was a carpentere,
 Paraventure in scorne, for I am on :
 And by your leve, I shal him quite anon.

Right

THE REVES TALE.

153

Right in his cherles termes wol I speke.
I pray to God his necke mote to-breke.
He can wel in min eye seen a stalk,
But in his owen he cannot seen a balk.

THE REVES TALE.

AT Trompington, not fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther goth a brook, and over that a brigge, 3920
Upon the whiche brook ther stont a melle:
And this is veray sothe, that I you telle.
A miller was ther dwelling many a day,
As any peacok he was proude and gay:
Pipen he coude, and fishe, and nettes bete,
And turnen cuppes, and wrafflen wel, and shete.
Ay by his belt he bare a long pavade,
And of a swerd ful trenchant was the blade.
A joly popper bare he in his pouche;
Ther n'as no man for peril dorst him touche. 3930
A Shefeld thwitel bare he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camuse was his nose.
As pilled as an ape was his skull.
He was a market-beter at the full.
Ther dorste no wight hond upon him legge,
That he ne swore he shuld anon abegge.
A thefe he was forsoth, of corn and mele,
And that a flie, and usant for to stele.

His

His name was hoten deinous Simekin.
 A wif he hadde, comen of noble kin : 3940
 The person of the toun hire father was.
 With hire he yaf ful many a panne of bras,
 For that Simkin shuld in his blood allie.
 She was yfostered in a nonnerie :
 For Simkin wolde no wif, as he sayde,
 But she were wel ynourished, and a mayde,
 To faven his estat of yemanrie :
 And she was proud, and pert as is a pie.
 A ful faire fight was it upon hem two.
 On holy dayes beforen hire wold he go 3950
 With his tipet ybounde about his hed ;
 And she came after in a gite of red,
 And Simkin hadde hosen of the same.
 Ther dorste no wight clepen hire but dame :
 Was non so hardy, that went by the way,
 That with hire dorste rage or ones play,
 But if he wold be slain of Simekin
 With pavade, or with knif, or bodekin.
 (For jalous folk ben perilous evermo :
 Algate they wold hir wives wenden so.) 3960
 And eke for she was soindel smoterlich,
 She was as digne as water in a dich,
 And al so ful of hoker, and of bismare.
 Hire thoughte that a ladie shuld hire spare,

What

What for hire kinrede, and hire nortelrie,
That she had lerned in the nonnerie.

A doughter hadden they betwix hem two
Of twenty yere, withouten any mo,
Saving a child that was of half yere age,
In cradle it lay, and was a propre page. 3970
This wenche thicke and wel ygrowen was,
With camuse nose, and eyen grey as glas;
With buttokes brode, and brestes round and hie;
But right faire was hire here, I wol nat lie.

The person of the toun, for she was faire,
In purpos was to maken hire his haire
Both of his catel, and of his mesuage,
And strange he made it of hire mariage.
His purpos was for to bestowe hire hie
Into som worthy blood of ancestrie. 3980
For holy chirches good mote ben despended
On holy chirches blood that is descended.
Therefore he wolde his holy blood honoure,
Though that he holy chirche shuld devoure.

Gret foken hath this miller out of doute
With whete and malt, of all the land aboute;
And namely ther was a gret college
Men clepe the Soler hall at Cantebrege,
Ther was hir whete and eke hir malt yground.
And on a day it happed in a stound, 3990

Sike lay the manciple on a maladie,
 Men wenden wisly that he shulde die.
 For which this miller stale both mele and corn
 An hundred times more than befor.
 For therbefor he stale but curteisly,
 But now he was a thefe outrageously.
 For which the wardein chidde and made fare,
 But therof set the miller not a tare;
 He craked boft, and swore it n'as not so.

Than were ther yonge poure scoleres two, 4000
 That dwelten in the halle of which I say;
 Testif they were, and lusty for to play;
 And only for hir mirth and revelrie
 Upon the wardein befily they crie,
 To yeve hem leve but a litel stound,
 To gon to mille, and seen hir corn yground:
 And hardily they dorsten lay hir necke,
 The miller shuld not stele hem half a pecke
 Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve.

And at the last the wardein yave hem leve: 4010
 John highte that on, and Alein highte that other,
 Of o toun were they born, that highte Strother,
 Fer in the North, I can not tellen where.

This Alein maketh redy all his gere,
 And on a hors the sak he cast anon:
 Forth goth Alein the clerk, and also John,

With

With good fwerd and with bokeler by hir fide.
 John knew the way, him neded not no guide,
 And at the mille the fak adoun he laith.

Alein fpake firft ; All haile, Simond, in faith, 4020
 How fares thy faire doughter, and thy wif ?

Alein, welcome (quod Simkin) by my lif,
 And John alfo: how now, what do ye here ?
 By God, Simond, (quod John) nede has no pere.
 Him behoves ferve himfelf that has na fwain,
 Or elles he is a fool, as clerkes fain.
 Our manicle I hope he wol be ded,
 Swa werkes ay the wanges in his hed :
 And therfore is I come, and eke Alein,
 To grind our corn and cary it hame agein : 4030
 I pray you fpede us henen that ye may.

It fhall be don (quod Simkin) by my fay.
 What wol ye don while that it is in hand ?
 By God, right by the hopper wol I ftand,
 (Quod John) and feen how that the corn gas in.
 Yet faw I never by my fader kin,
 How that the hopper wagges til and fra.

Alein answered ; John, and wolt thou fwa ?
 Than wol I be benethe by my croun,
 And fee how that the mele falles adoun 4040
 In til the trogh, that fhall be my difport :
 For, John, in faith I may ben of your fort ;

I is

I is as ill a miller as is ye.

This miller smiled at hir nicetee,
 And thought, all this n'is don but for a wile:
 They wenen that no man may hem begile;
 But by my thrift yet shal I blere hir eie,
 For all the sleighte in hir philosophie.
 The more queinte knakkes that they make,
 The more wol I stele whan that I take. 4050
 In stede of flour yet wol I yeve hem bren.
 The gretest clerkes ben not the wisest men,
 As whilom to the wolf thus spake the mare:
 Of all hir art ne count I not a tare.

Out at the dore he goth ful prively,
 Whan that he saw his time softely.
 He loketh up and doun, til he hath found
 The clerkes hors, ther as he stood ybound
 Behind the mille, under a levesell:
 And to the hors he goth him faire and well, 4060
 And stripeth of the bridel right anon.

And whan the hors was laus, he gan to gon
 Toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne,
 And forth, with wehee, thurgh thick and thinne.
 This miller goth again, no word he said,
 But doth his note, and with these clerkes plaid,
 Till that hir corn was faire and wel yground.
 And whan the mele is sacked and ybound,

This

This John goth out, and fint his hors away,
And gan to crie, harow and wala wa! 4070
Our hors is lost : Alein, for Goddes banes,
Step on thy feet ; come of, man, al at anes :
Alas ! our wardein has his palfrey lorn.

This Alein al forgat both mele and corn ;
Al was out of his mind his husbandrie :
What, whilke way is he gon ? he gan to crie.

The wif came leping inward at a renne,
She fayd ; Alas ! youre hors goth to the fenne
With wilde mares, as fast as he may go.
Unthank come on his hand that bond him so, 4080
And he that better shuld have knit the rein.

Alas ! (quod John) Alein, for Cristes pein
Lay down thy swerd, and I shal min alswa.
I is ful wight, God wate, as is a ra.
By Goddes faule he shal not scape us bathe.
Why ne had thou put the capel in the lathe ?
Ill haile, Alein, by God thou is a fonne.

These fely clerkes han ful fast yronne
Toward the fen, bothe Alein and eke John :
And whan the miller saw that they were gon, 4090
He half a bushel of hir flour hath take,
And bad his wif go knede it in a cake.
He fayd ; I trow, the clerkes were aferde.
Yet can a miller make a clerkes berde,

For

For all his art. 'Ye, let hem gon hir way:
Lo wher they gon. Ye, let the children play:
They get him not so lightly by my croun.

These fely clerkes rennen up and doun
With kepe, kepe; stand, stand; joffa, warderere.
Ga whistle thou, and I shal kepe him here. 4100
But shortly, til that it was veray night
They coude not, though they did all hir might,
Hir capel catch, he ran alway so fast:
Til in a dicke they caught him at the last.

Wery and wet, as bestes in the rain,
Cometh fely John, and with him cometh Alein.
Alas (quod John) the day that I was borne!
Now are we driven til hething and til scorne.
Our corn is stolne, men wol us fonnes calle,
Both the wardein, and eke our felawes alle, 4110
And namely the miller, wala wa!

Thus plaineth John, as he goth by the way
Toward the mille, and bayard in his hond.
The miller fitting by the fire he fond,
For it was night, and forther might they nought,
But for the love of God they him besought
Of herberwe and of ese, as for hir peny.

The miller saide agen, if ther be any,
Swiche as it is, yet shull ye have your part.
Myn hous is streit, but ye have lerned art; 4120

Ye

Ye can by arguments maken a place
A mile brode, of twenty foot of space.
Let see now if this place may suffice,
Or make it rounne with speche, as is your gise.
Now, Simond, (said this John) by Seint Cuthberd
Ay is thou mery, and that is faire answerd.
I have herd say, man sal take of twa thinges,
Slike as he findes, or slike as he bringes.
But specially I pray thee, hoste dere,
Gar us have mete and drinke, and make us chere, 4130
And we sal paien trewely at the full :
With empty hand, men may na haukes tull.
Lo here our silver redy for to spend.

This miller to the toun his doughter send
For ale and bred, and rosted hem a goos,
And bond hir hors, he shuld no more go loos :
And in his owen chambre hem made a bedde,
With shetes and with chalons faire yspredde,
Nat from his owen bed ten foot or twelve :
His doughter had a bed all by hire selve, 4140
Right in the same chambre by and by :
It mighte be no bet, and cause why,
Ther was no roumer herberwe in the place.
They soupen, and they speken of solace,
And drinken ever strong ale at the best.
Abouten midnight wente they to rest.

Wel hath this miller vernished his hed,
 Ful pale he was, for-dronken, and nought red.
 He yoxeth, and he speketh thurgh the nose,
 As he were on the quakke, or on the pose. 4150
 To bed he goth, and with him goth his wif;
 As any jay she light was and jolif,
 So was hire joly whistle wel ywette.
 The cradel at hire beddes feet was sette,
 To rocken, and to yeve the child to fouke.
 And whan that dronken was all in the crouke
 To bedde went the doughter right anon,
 To bedde goth Alein, and also John.
 Ther n'as no more; nedeth hem no dwale.
 This miller hath so wisly bibbed ale, 4160
 That as an hors he snorteth in his slepe,
 Ne of his tail behind he toke no kepe.
 His wif bare him a burdon a ful strong;
 Men might hir routing heren a furlong.
 The wenche routeth eke *par compaignie*.
 Alein the clerk that herd this melodie,
 He poketh John, and sayde: Slepest thou?
 Herdest thou ever slike a song er now?
 Lo whilke a complin is ymell hem alle.
 A wilde fire upon hir bodies falle, 4170
 Wha herkned ever slike a ferly thing?
 Ye, they shall have the flour of yvel ending.

This

This lange night ther tides me no reste.
 But yet na force, all shal be for the beste.
 For, John, (sayd he) as ever mote I thrive,
 If that I may, yon wenche wol I swive.
 Som esement has lawe yshapen us,
 For, John, ther is a lawe that saieth thus,
 That if a man in o point be agreved,
 That in anothe he shal be releved.

4180

Our corn is stolne, sothly it is na nay,
 And we han had an yvel fit to-day.
 And sin I shal have nan amendeunt
 Again my losse, I wol have an esement :
 By Goddes saule, it shal nan other be.

This John answered ; Alein, avise thee :
 The miller is a perilous man, he sayde.
 And if that he out of his slepe abraide,
 He mighte don us bathe a vilanie.

Alein answered ; I count him nat a flie.

4199

And up he rist, and by the wenche he crept.
 This wenche lay upright, and faste slept,
 Til he so nigh was, er she might espie,
 That it had ben to late for to crie :

And shortly for to say, they were at on.
 Now play, Alein, for I wol speke of John.

This John lith still a furlong way or two,
 And to himself he maketh routh and wo.

M 2

Alas !

Alas ! (quod he) this is a wicked jape ;
 Now may I say, that I is but an ape. 4209
 Yet has my felaw somwhat for his harme ;
 He has the millers doughter in his arme :
 He auntred him, and hath his nedes spedde,
 And I lie as a draf fak in my bedde ;
 And whan this jape is tald another day,
 I shal be halden a daffe or a cokenay :
 I wol arise, and auntre it by my fay :
 Unhardy is unfely, thus men fay.

And up he rose, and softely he went
 Unto the cradel, and in his hand it hent, 4210
 And bare it soft unto his beddes fete.
 Sone after this the wif hire routing lete,
 And gan awake, and went hire out to pisse,
 And came again, and gan the cradel misse,
 And groped here and ther, but she fond non.
 Alas ! (quod she) I had almost misgon.
 I had almost gon to the clerkes bedde.
 Ey *benedicite*, than had I foule yspedde.
 And forth she goth, til she the cradel fond.
 She gropeth alway forther with hire hond, 4220
 And fond the bed, and thoughte nat but good,
 Because that the cradel by it stood,
 And n'iste wher she was, for it was derk,
 But faire and wel she crept in by the clerk,

And

And lith ful still, and wold han caught a slepe.
 Within a while this John the clerk up lepe,
 And on this goode wif he laieth on fore;
 So mery a fit ne had she nat ful yore.
 He priketh hard and depe, as he were mad.

This joly lif han these two clerkes lad, 4230
 Til that the thridde cok began to sing.

Alein wex werie in the morwening,
 For he had swonken all the longe night,
 And sayd; Farewel, Malkin, my fwete wight.
 The day is come, I may no longer bide,
 But evermo, wher so I go or ride,
 I is thin awen clerk, so have I hele.

Now, dere lemman, quod she, go farewele :
 But or thou go, o thing I wol thee tell. 4239

Whan that thou wendest homeward by the mell,
 Right at the entree of the dore behind
 Thou shalt a cake of half a busshel find,
 That was ymaked of thin owen mele,
 Which that I halpe my fader for to stele.
 And goode lemman, God thee save and kepe.
 And with that word she gan almost to wepe.

Alein uprist and thought, er that it daw
 I wol go crepen in by my felaw :
 And fond the cradel at his hand anon.

By God, thought he, all wrang I have misgon : 4250

My hed is tottie of my swink to night,
 That maketh me that I go nat aright.
 I wot wel by the cradel I have misgo;
 Here lith the miller and his wif also.
 And forth he goth a twenty divel way
 Unto the bed, ther as the miller lay.
 He wend have copen by his felaw John,
 And by the miller in he crept anon,
 And caught him by the nekke, and gan him shake,
 And sayd; Thou John, thou swineshed awake, 4260
 For Cristes saule, and here a noble game:
 For by that lord that called is Seint Jame,
 As I have thries as in this short night
 Swived the millers doughter bolt upright,
 While thou hast as a coward ben agast.

Ye, false harlot, quod the miller, hast?
 A, false traitour, false clerk, (quod he)
 Thou shalt be ded by Goddes dignitee,
 Who dorste be so bold to disparage
 My doughter, that is come of swiche lineage. 4270
 And by the throte-bolle he caught Alein,
 And he him hent despitously again,
 And on the nose he smote him with his fist;
 Doun ran the bloody streame upon his brest:
 And in the flore with nose and mouth to-broke
 They walwe, as don two pigges in a poke.

And

And up they gon, and doun again anon,
Til that the miller sporned at a ston,
And doun he fell backward upon his wif,
That wiste nothing of this nice strif: 4280
For she was fall aslepe a litel wight
With John the clerk, that waked had all night:
And with the fall out of hire slepe she braide.
Helpe, holy crois of Bromeholme, (she sayde)
In manus tuas, Lord, to thee I call.
Awake, Simond, the fend is on me fall;
Myn herte is broken; helpe; I n'am but ded;
Ther lith on up my wombe and up myn hed.
Helpe, Simkin, for the false clerkes fight.
This John stert up as fast as ever he might, 4290
And graspeth by the walles to and fro
To find a staf, and she stert up also,
And knew the estres bet than did this John,
And by the wall she toke a staf anon:
And saw a litel shemering of a light,
For at an hole in shone the mone bright,
And by that light she saw hem bothe two,
But fikerly she n'iste who was who,
But as she saw a white thing in hire eye.
And whan she gan this white thing espie, 4300
She wend the clerk had wered a volupere;
And with the staf she drow ay nere and nere,

And wend han hit this Alein atte full,
 And smote the miller on the pilled skull,
 That down he goth, and cried, harow ! I die.
 Thise clerkes bete him wel, and let him lie,
 And greithen hem, and take hir hors anon,
 And eke hir mele, and on hir way they gon :
 And at the mille dore eke they toke hir cake
 Of half a busshel flour, ful wel ybake. 4319

Thus is the proude miller wel ybete,
 And hath yloft the grinding of the whete,
 And paied for the souper every del
 Of Alein and of John, that bete him wel ;
 His wif is fwived, and his doughter als ;
 Lo, swiche it is a miller to be fals.
 And therfore this proverbe is sayd ful soth,
 Him thar not winnen wel that evil doth ;
 A gilour shal himself begiled be :
 And God that siteth hie in magestee 4320
 Save all this compaignie, gret and smale.
 Thus have I quit the miller in my tale.

THE COKES PROLOGUE.

THE Coke of London, while the Reve spake,
 For joye (him thought) he clawed him on the bak :
 A ha (quod he) for Cristes passion,
 This miller had a sharpe conclusion,

Upon

THE COKES PROLOGUE. 169

Upon this argument of herbergage.
Wel sayde Salomon in his langage,
Ne bring not every man into thin hous,
For herberwing by night is perilous. 4330

Wel ought a man avised for to be
Whom that he brought into his privetee.
I pray to God so yeve me forwe and care,
If ever, sithen I highte Hodge of Ware,
Herd I a miller bet yfette a-werk ;
He had a jape of malice in the derk.

But God forbede that we stinten here,
And therfore if ye vouchen fauf to here
A tale of me that am a poure man,
I wol you tell as wel as ever I can 4340
A litel jape that fell in our citee.

Our Hoste answerd and sayde ; I grant it thee :
Now tell on, Roger, and loke that it be good,
For many a pastee hast thou letten blood,
And many a Jacke of Dover hast thou sold,
That hath been twies hot and twies cold.
Of many a pilgrim hast thou Cristes curse,
For of thy perselee yet fare they the werse,
That they han eten in thy stoble goos :
For in thy shop goth many a flie loos. 4350
Now tell on, gentil Roger by thy name,
But yet I pray thee be not wroth for game ;

A man

A man may say ful soth in game and play.

Thou sayst ful soth, quod Roger, by my fay ;
But soth play *quade spel*, as the Fleming saith :

And therefore, Herry Bailly, by thy faith,
Be thou not wroth, or we departen here,
Though that my tale be of an hostelere.

But natheles, I wol not telle it yet,
But er we part, ywis thou shalt be quit.

And therewithal he lough and made chere,
And sayd his tale, as ye shul after here.

4360

THE COKES TALE.

A PRENTIS whilom dwelt in our citee,
And of a craft of vitailers was he :

Gaillard he was, as goldfinch in the shawe,
Broune as a bery, a propre short felawe :
With lokkes blake, kembed ful fetisly.

Dancen he coude so wel and jolily,
That he was cleped Perkin Revelour.

He was as ful of love and paramour,
As is the hive ful of hony swete ;

Wel was the wenche with him mighte mete.

At every bridale would he sing and hoppe ;
He loved bet the taverne than the shoppe.

For whan ther any riding was in Chepe,
Out of the shoppe thider wold he lepe,

And

And til that he had all the fight yfein,
And danced wel, he wold not come agein;
And gadred him a meinie of his fort, 4379
To hoppe and fing, and maken swiche disport:

And ther they setten steven for to mete
To plaien at the dis in swiche a strete.
For in the toun ne was ther no prentis,
That fairer coude caste a pair of dis
Than Perkin coude, and therto he was fre
Of his dispence, in place of privetee.
That fond his maister wel in his chaffare,
For often time he fond his box ful bare.

For sothly, a prentis, a revelour,
That hanteth dis, riot and paramour, 4390
His maister shal it in his shoppe abie,
Al have he no part of the minstralcie.
For theft and riot they ben convertible,
Al can they play on giterne or ribible.
Revel and trouth, as in a low degree,
They ben ful wroth all day, as men may see.

This joly prentis with his maister abode,
Til he was neigh out of his prentishode,
Al were he snibbed bothe erly and late,
And somtime lad with revel to Newgate. 4400
But at the last his maister him bethought
Upon a day, whan he his paper fought,

Of

Of a proverbe, that faith this fame word ;
 Wel bet is roten appel out of hord,
 Than that it rotes all the remenant :
 So fareth it by a riotous servant ;
 It is wel lasse harm to let him pace,
 Than he shende all the servants in the place.
 Therefore his maister gaf him a quitance, 4409
 And bad him go, with sorwe and with meschance.
 And thus this joly prentis had his leve :
 Now let him riot all the night or leve.

And for ther n'is no thefe without a louke,
 That helpeth him to wasten and to souke
 Of that he briben can, or borwe may,
 Anon he sent his bed and his array
 Unto a compere of his owen sort,
 That loved dis, and riot, and disport ;
 And had a wif, that held for contenance
 A shoppe, and swived for hire sustenance. 4429

* * * * *

THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGUE.

OUR Hoste saw wel, that the brighte sonne
 The ark of his artificial day had ronne
 The fourthe part, and half an houre and more ;
 And though he were not depe expert in lore,

He

THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGUE. 173

He wiste it was the eighte and twenty day
Of April, that is messager to May;
And saw wel that the shadow of every tree
Was as in lengthe of the same quantitee
That was the body erect, that caused it;
And therfore by the shadow he toke his wit, 4430
That Phebus, which that shone so clere and bright,
Degrees was five and fourty clombe on hight;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten of the klok, he gan conclude;
And sodenly he plight his hors aboute.

Lordings, quod he, I warne you all this route,
The fourthe partie of this day is gon.
Now for the love of God and of Seint John
Lefeth no time, as ferforth as ye may.
Lordings, the time it wasteth night and day, 4440
And steleth from us, what prively sleping,
And what thurgh negligence in our waking,
As doth the streame, that turneth never again,
Descending fro the montagne into a plain.
Wel can Senek and many a philosophre
Bewailen time, more than gold in coffre.
For losse of catel may recovered be,
But losse of time shendeth us, quod he.
It wol not come again withouten drede,
No more than wol Malkins maidenhede, 4450

Whan

174 THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGUE.

Whan she hath lost it in hire wantonnesse.
Let us not moulen thus in idelnesse.

Sire man of Lawe, quod he, so have ye blis,
Tell us a tale anon, as forword is.
Ye ben submitted thurgh your free assent
To stonde in this cas at my jugement.
Acquiteth you now, and holdeth your behest;
Than have ye don your devoir at the lest.

Hofte, quod he, *de par dieux jeo assente*,
To breken forword is not min entente. 4460
Behest is dette, and I wold hold it fayn
All my behest, I can no better sayn.
For swiche lawe as man yeveth another wight,
He shuld himselven usen it by right.

Thus wol our text: but natheles certain
I can right now no thrifty tale sain,
But Chaucer (though he can but lewedly
On metres and on riming craftily)
Hath sayd hem, in swiche English as he can
Of olde time, as knoweth many a man. 4470
And if he have not sayd hem, leve brother,
In o book, he hath sayd hem in another.
For he hath told of lovers up and down,
Mo than Ovide made of mentioun
In his *Epistolis*, that ben ful olde.
What shuld I tellen hem, fin they ben tolde?

In

THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGUE. 175

In youthe he made of Ceys and Alcyon,
And fithen hath he spoke of everich on
Thise noble wives, and thise lovers eke.
Who so that wol his large volume seke 4480
Cleped the feintes legende of Cupide :
Ther may he se the large woundes wide
Of Lucrece, and of Babylon Thisbe ;
The swerd of Dido for the false Enee ;
The tree of Phillis for hire Demophon ;
The plaint of Deianire, and Hermion,
Of Adriane, and Ysiphilee ;
The barreine ile stonding in the see ;
The dreint Leandre for his fayre Hero ;
The teres of Heleine, and eke the wo 4490
Of Briseide, and of Lademia ;
The crueltee of thee, quene Medea,
Thy litel children hanging by the hals,
For thy Jafon, that was of love so fals.
O Hipermestra, Penelope, Alceste,
Your wifhood he commendeth with the beste.

But certainly no word ne writeth he
Of thilke wicke ensample of Canace,
That loved hire owen brother sinfully ;
(Of all swiche cursed stories I say fy) 4500
Or elles of Tyrius Appolonius,
How that the cursed king Antiochus

Beraft

176 THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGUE.

Beraft his doughter of hire maidenhede,
 That is fo horrible a tale for to rede,
 Whan he hire threw upon the pavement.
 And therfore he of ful avifement
 N'old never write in non of his fermons
 Of fwiche unkinde abhominations;
 Ne I wol non reherfe, if that I may.
 But of my tale how fhall I don this day?
 Me were loth to be likened douteles
 To Mufes, that men clepe Pierides,
 (*Metamorphoseos* wote what I mene)
 But natheles I recche not a bene,
 Though I come after him with hawebake,
 I fpeke in profe, and let him rimes make.
 And with that word, he with a fobre chere
 Began his tale, and fayde, as ye fhall here.

4510

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

O SCATHFUL harm, condition of poverte,
 With thirft, with cold, with hunger fo confounded,
 To asken helpe thee fhame in thin herte,
 If thou non ask, fo fore art thou ywounded,
 That veray nede unwrappeth al thy wound hid.
 Maugre thin hed thou muft for indigence
 Or ftele, or begge, or borwe thy difpence.

Thou

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 177

Thou blamest Crist, and sayst ful bitterly,
He misdeparteth richeffe temporal;
Thy neighebour thou witefst sinfully,
And sayst, thou hast to litel, and he hath all:
Parfay (sayst thou) somtime he reken shall, 4530
Whan that his tayl shal brennen in the glede,
For he nought helpeth needful in hir nede.

Herken what is the sentence of the wise,
Bet is to dien than have indigence.
Thy selve neighebour wol thee despise,
If thou be poure, farewell thy reverence.
Yet of the wise man take this sentence,
Alle the dayes of poure men ben wicke,
Beware therfore or thou come to that pricke.

If thou be poure, thy brother hateth thee, 4540
And all thy frendes fleen fro thee, alas!
O riche marchants, ful of wele ben ye,
O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas,
Your bagges ben not filled with ambes as,
But with fis cink, that renneth for your chance;
At Cristenmasse mery may ye dance.

Ye seken lond and see for your winninges,
As wise folk ye knowen all th'estat

178 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

Of regnes, ye ben fathers of tidinges,
 And tales, both of pees and of debat : 4550
 I were right now of tales defolat,
 N'ere that a marchant, gon is many a yere,
 Me taught a tale, which that ye shull here.

IN Surrie whilom dwelt a compaignie
 Of chapmen rich, and therto fad and trewe,
 That wide where senten hir spicerie,
 Clothes of gold, and satins riche of hewe.
 Hir chaffare was so thrifty and so newe,
 That every wight hath deintee to chaffare
 With hem, and eke to sellen hem hir ware. 4560

Now fell it, that the maisters of that fort
 Han shapen hem to Rome for to wende,
 Were it for chapmanhood or for disport,
 Non other message wold they thider sende,
 But comen hemself to Rome, this is the ende :
 And in swiche place as thought hem advantage
 For hir entente, they taken hir herbergage.

Sojourned han these marchants in that toun
 A certain time, as fell to hir plesance :
 And so befell, that the excellent renoun 4570
 Of

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 179

Of the emperoures doughter dame Custance
Reported was, with every circumstance,
Unto these Surrien marchants, in swiche wise
Fro day to day, as I shal you devise,

This was the comun vois of every man :
Our emperour of Rome, God him se,
A doughter hath, that fin the world began,
To reken as wel hire goodnesse as beaute,
N'as never swiche another as is she :
I pray to God in honour hire sustene, 4580
And wold she were of all Europe the quene.

In hire is high beaute withouten pride,
Youthe, withouten grenehed or folie :
To all hire werkes vertue is hire guide ;
Humbleesse hath slaien in hire tyrannie :
She is mirrour of alle curtesie,
Hire herte is veray chambre of holinesse,
Hire hond ministre of fredom for almesse.

And al this vois was soth, as God is trewe,
But now to purpos let us turne agein. 4590
These marchants han don fraught hir shippes newe,
And whan they han this blisful maiden sein,
Home to Surrie ben they went ful fayn,

180 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

And don hir nedes, as they han don yore,
And liven in wele, I can fay you no more.

Now fell it, that these marchants stood in grace
Of him that was the Soudan of Surrie :
For whan they came from any strange place
He wold of his benigne curtesie
Make hem good chere, and besily espie 4600
Tidings of fundry regnes, for to lere
The wonders that they mighte seen or here.

Amonges other thinges specially
These marchants han him told of dame Custance
So gret nobleffe, in ernest seriously,
That this Soudan hath caught so gret plesance
To han hire figure in his remembrance,
That all his lust, and all his besy cure
Was for to love hire, while his lif may dure.

Paraventure in thilke large book, 4610
Which that men clepe the heven, ywritten was
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,
That he for love shuld han his deth, alas !
For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,
Is writen, God wot, who so coud it rede,
The deth of every man withouten drede.

In

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 181

In sterres many a winter therbeforn
Was writ the deth of Hector, Achilles,
Of Pompey, Julius, or they were born;
The strif of Thebes; and of Hercules, 4620
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
The deth; but mennes wittes ben so dull,
That no wight can wel rede it at the full.

This Soudan for his prive councel fent,
And shortly of this matere for to pace,
He hath to hem declared his entent,
And sayd hem certain, but he might have grace
To han Custance, within a litel space,
He n'as but ded, and charged hām in hie
To shapen for his lif som remedie. 4630

Diverse men, diverse thinges saiden;
They argumentes casten up and down;
Many a subtil reson forth they laiden;
They speken of magike, and abusyon;
But finally, as in conclusion,
They cannot seen in that non advantage,
Ne in non other way, save mariage.

Than saw they therin swiche difficultee
By way of reson, for to speke all plain,

N 3

Becauf

182 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

Because ther was swiche diversitee 4640
 Betwene hir bothe lawes, that they fayn,
 They trowen that no cristen prince wold fayn
 Wedden his child under our lawe fwete,
 That us was yeven by Mahound our prophete,

And he answered: Rather than I lese
 Custance, I wol be cristened douteles:
 I mote ben hires, I may non other chese,
 I pray you hold your arguments in pees,
 Saveth my lif, and beth not reccheles
 To geten hire that hath my lif in cure, 4650
 For in this wo I may not long endure,

What nedeth greter dilatation?
 I say, by tretise and ambassatrie,
 And by the popes mediation,
 And all the chirche, and all the chevalrie,
 That in destruction of Maunetrie,
 And in encrese of Cristes lawe dere,
 They ben accorded so as ye may here;

How that the Soudan and his baronage,
 And all his lieges shuld ycristened be, 4660
 And he shal han Custance in mariage,
 And certain gold, I n'ot what quantitee,
 And hereto finden suffisant suretee.

The

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 183

The fame accord is fworne on eyther fide ;
Now, fair Cufance, almighty God thee gide.

Now wolden fom men waiten, as I gefle,
That I fhuld tellen all the purveiance,
The which that the emperour of his nobleffe
Hath shapen for his doughter dame Cufance.
Wel may men know that fo gret ordinance 4670
May no man tellen in a litel claufe,
As was arraied for fo high a caufe.

Bifhopes ben shapen with hire for to wende,
Lordes, ladies, and knightes of renoun,
And other folk ynow, this is the end.
And notified is thurghout al the toun,
That every wight with gret devotioun
Shuld prayen Crift, that he this mariage
Receive in gree, and fpede this viage.

The day is comen of hire departing, 4680
I fay the woful day fatal is come,
That ther may be no longer tarying,
But forward they hem drefsen all and fome,
Cufance, that was with forwe all overcome,
Ful pale arift, and drefseth hire to wende,
For wel she feth ther n'is non other ende.

Alas! what wonder is it though she wept?
 That shal be sent to straunge nation
 Fro frendes, that so tendrely hire kept,
 And to be bounde under subjection 4690
 Of on, she knoweth not his condition.
 Housbondes ben all good, and han ben yore,
 That knowen wives, I dare say no more,

Fader, (she said) thy wretched child Custance,
 Thy yonge doughter, fostered up so soft,
 And ye, my moder, my soveraine plesance
 Over all thing, (out taken Crist on lost)
 Custance your child hire recommendeth oft
 Unto your grace; for I shal to Surrie,
 Ne shal I never seen you more with eye. 4700

Alas! unto the Barbare nation
 I muste gon, sin that it is your will:
 But Crist, that starfe for our redemption,
 So yeve me grace his hestes to fulfill,
 I wretched woman no force though I spill;
 Women arn borne to thraldom and penance,
 And to ben under mannes governance.

I trow at Troye whan Pirrus brake the wall,
 Or Ilion brent, or Thebes the citee,

Ne

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 185

Ne at Rome for the harm thurgh Hanniball, 4710
That Romans hath venqueshed times three,
N'as herd swiche tendre weping for pitee,
As in the chambre was for hire parting,
But forth she mote, wheder she wepe or sing.

O firste moving cruel firmament,
With thy diurnal swegh that croudest ay,
And hurtlest all from Est til Occident,
That naturally wold hold another way;
Thy crouding fet the heven in swiche array
At the beginning of this fierce viage, 4720
That cruel Mars hath slain this marriage.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lord is helpeles fall, alas!
Out of his angle into the derkest hous.
O Mars, o Atyzar, as in this cas;
O feble Mone, unhappy ben thy pas,
Thou knittest thee ther thou art not received,
Ther thou were wel fro thennes art thou weived.

Imprudent emperour of Rome, alas!
Was ther no philosophre in al thy toun? 4730
Is no time bet than other in swiche cas?
Of viage is ther non electioun,
Namely to folk of high conditioun,

Nat

186 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

Nat whan a rote is of a birth yknowe ?
 Alas ! we ben to lewed, or to flow.

To ship is brought this woful faire maid
 Solempnely, with every circumstance :
 Now Jesu Crist be with you all, she said.
 Ther n'is no more, but farewell fair Custance.
 She peineth hire to make good countenance, 474^o
 And forth I let hire sayle in this manere,
 And turne I wol againe to my matere.

The mother of the Soudan, well of vices,
 Espied hath hire sones pleine entente,
 How he wol lete his olde sacrifices :
 And right anon she for her conseil sente,
 And they ben comen, to know what she mente,
 And whan assembled was this folk in fere,
 She set hire doun, and sayd as ye shul here.

Lordes, (she sayd) ye knowen everich on,
 How that my sone in point is for to lete
 The holy lawes of our Alkaron,
 Yeven by Goddes messager Mahomete :
 But on avow to grete God I hete,
 The lif shal rather out of my body sterte,
 Than Mahometes lawe out of myn herte,

What

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 187

What shuld us tiden of this newe lawe
But thraldom to our bodies and penance,
And afterward in helle to ben drawe,
For we reneied Mahound our creance? 4760
But, lordes, wol ye maken assurance,
As I shal say, assenting to my lore?
And I shal make us sauf for evermore.

They sworn, and assented every man
To live with hire and die, and by hire stond:
And everich on, in the best wise he can,
To strengthen hire shal all his frendes fond.
And she hath this emprise ytaken in hond,
Which ye shull heren that I shal devise,
And to hem all she spake right in this wise. 4770

We shul first feine us cristendom to take;
Cold water shal not greve us but a lite:
And I shal swiche a feste and revel make,
That, as I trow, I shal the Soudan quite.
For tho his wif be cristened never so white,
She shal have nede to wash away the rede,
Though she a font of water with hire lede.

O Soudanneffe, rote of iniquitee,
Virago thou Semyramee the second,

O serpent

O serpent under femininitee, 4780
 Like to the serpent depe in helle ybound :
 O feined woman, all that may confound
 Vertue and innocence, thurgh thy malice
 Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice.

O Sathan envious, fin thilke day
 That thou were chafed from our heritage,
 Wel knowest thou to woman the olde way.
 Thou madeft Eva bring us in fervice,
 Thou wolt fordon this cristen mariage :
 Thin instrument fo (wala wa the while !) 4790
 Makeft thou of women whan thou wolt begile.

This Soudanneffe, whom I thus blame and warrie,
 Let prively hire confeil gon hir way :
 What shuld I in this tale longer tarie ?
 She rideth to the Soudan on a day,
 And fayd him, that she wold reneie hire lay,
 And cristendom of prestes hondes fong,
 Repenting hire she hethen was so long ;

Beseching him to don hire that honour,
 That she might han the cristen folk to fest : 4800
 To plesen hem I wol do my labour.
 The Soudan faith, I wol don at your hest,
 And kneeling, thanked hire of that request ;

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.. 189

So glad he was, ne n'iste not what to say,
She kist hire sone, and home she goth hire way.

Arrived ben these cristen folk to lond
In Surrie, with a gret solempne route,
And hastily this Soudan sent his fond,
First to his mother, and all the regne aboute,
And sayd, his wif was comen out of doute, 4810
And praide hem for to riden again the quene,
The honour of his regne to sustene.

Gret was the presse, and riche was th'array
Of Surriens and Romanes met in fere.
The mother of the Soudan riche and gay
Received hire with all so glad a chere,
As any mother might hire doughter dere :
And to the nexte citee ther beside
A softe pas solempnely they ride.

Nought trow I, the triumph of Julius, 4820
Of which that Lucan maketh swiche a boft,
Was realler, or more curious,
Than was th'assemblee of this blisful host :
But ~~set~~ this scorpion, this wicked goft,
The Soudanneffe, for all hire flattering
Cast under this ful mortally to sting.

Butte

The

190 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

The Soudan cometh himself sone after this
 So really, that wonder is to tell :
 And welcometh hire with allejoye and blis.
 And thus in mirth and joye I let hem dwell. 4830
 The fruit of this matere is that I tell.
 Whan time came, men thought it for the best
 That revel flint, and men go to hir rest.

The time come is, this olde Soudanneffe
 Ordeined hath the feste of which I tolde,
 And to the feste cristen folk hem dresse
 In general, ya bothe yonge and olde.
 Ther may men fest and realtee beholde,
 And deintees mo than I can you devise,
 But all to dere they bought it or they rise. 4840

O foden wo, that ever art successeur
 To worldly blis, spreint is with bitterneffe
 Th' ende of the joye of our worldly labour :
 Wo occupieth the fyn of our gladnesse.
 Herken this conseil for thy fikerneffe :
 Upon thy glade day have in thy minde
 The unware wo of harm, that cometh behinde.

For shortly for to tellen at a word,
 The Soudan and the cristen everich on

Ben

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 191

Ben all to-hewe, and stiked at the bord, 4850
But it were only dame Custance alone.
This olde Soudanneffe, this cursed crone,
Hath with hire frendes don this cursed dede,
For she hireself wold all the contree lede.

Ne ther was Surrien non that was converted,
That of the conseil of the Soudan wot,
That he n'as all to-hewe, er he asserted :
And Custance han they taken anon fote-hot,
And in a ship all steeles (God wot)
They han hire fet, and bidden hire lerne sayle 4860
Out of Surrie againward to Itaille.

A certain trefor that she thither ladde,
And soth to sayn, vitaille gret plentee,
They han hire yeven, and clothes eke she hadde,
And forth she sayleth in the salte see :
O my Custance, ful of benignitee,
O emperoures yonge doughter dere,
He that is lord of fortune be thy stee.

She blesseth hire, and with ful pitous vois
Unto the crois of Crist thus sayde she. 4870
O clere, o weleful auter, holy crois,
Red of the lambes blood ful of pitee,
That wesh the world fro the old iniquitee,

Me

192 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

Me fro the fende, and fro his clawes kepe,
That day that I shal drenchen in the depe.

worthy were
Victorious tree, protection of trewe,
That only were ordeined for to bere
The king of heven, with his woundes newe,
The white lamb, that hurt was with a spere;
Flemer of fendes, out of him and here 4880
On which thy limmes faithfully extenden,
Me kepe, and yeve me might my lif to amenden.

Yeres and dayes fleet this creature
Thurghout the see of Grece, unto the straite
Of Maroc, as it was hire aventure:
On many a fory mele now may she baite,
After hire deth ful often may she waite,
Or that the wilde waves wol hire drive
Unto the place ther as she shal arive.

Men mighten asken, why she was not slain? 4890
Eke at the feste who might hire body save?
And I answer to that demand again,
Who saved Daniel in the horrible cave,
Ther every wight, save he, master or knave,
Was with the leon fette, or he asterte?
No wight but God, that he bare in his herte.

God

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 193

God list to shew his wonderful miracle
In hire, for we shuld seen his mighty werkes :
Crist, which that is to every harm triacle,
By certain menes oft, as knowen clerkes, 4900
Doth thing for certain ende, that ful derke is
To mannes wit, that for our ignorance
Ne can nat know his prudent purveiance.

Now sith she was not at the feste yflawe,
Who kepte hire fro the drenching in the see ?
Who kepte Jonas in the fishes mawe,
Til he was spouted up at Ninivee ?
Wel may men know, it was no wight but he
That kept the peple Ebraike fro drenching,
With drye feet thurghout the see passing. 4910

Who bade the foure spirits of tempest,
That power han to anoyen lond and see,
Both north and fouth, and also west and est,
Anoyen neyther see, ne lond, ne tree ?
Sothly the commander of that was he
That fro the tempest ay this woman kepte,
As wel whan she awoke as whan she slepte.

Wher might this woman mete and drinke have ?
Three yere and more, how lasteth hire vitaille ?

VOL. I.

O

Who

194 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

Who fed the Egyptian Mary in the cave 4920
Or in desert? no wight but Crist *sans faille*.
Five thousand folk it was as gret marvaille
With loves five and fishes two to fede:
God sent his foyson at hire grete nede.

She driveth forth into our Ocean
Thurghout our wide see, til at the last
Under an hold, that nempnen I ne can,
Fer in Northumberlond, the wave hire cast,
And in the sand hire ship stiked so fast,
That thennes wolde it not in all a tide: 4930
The wille of Crist was that she shulde abide.

The constable of the castle down is fare
To seen this wrecke, and al the ship he fought,
And fond this wery woman ful of care;
He fond also the trefour that she brought:
In hire langage mercy she besought,
The lif out of hire body for to twinne,
Hire to deliver of wo that she was inne.

A maner Latin corrupt was hire speche,
But algate therby was she understond. 4940
The constable, whan him list no lenger seche,
This woful woman brought he to the lond.
She kneleth down, and thanketh Goddes fond;

But

But what she was, she wolde no man feye
For foule ne faire, though that she shulde deye.

She said, she was so mased in the see,
That she forgate hire minde, by hire trouth.
The constable hath of hire so gret pitee
And eke his wif, that they wepen for routh :
She was so diligent withouten slouth 4950
To serve and plesen everich in that place,
That all hire love, that loken in hire face.

The constable and dame Hermegild his wif
Were payenes, and that contree every wher ;
But Hermegild loved Custance as hire lif ;
And Custance hath so long sojourned ther
In orisons, with many a bitter tere,
Til Jesu hath converted thurgh his grace
Dame Hermegild, constableffe of that place.

In all that lond no cristen dorste route ; 4960
All cristen folk ben fled fro that contree
Thurgh payenes, that conquereden all aboute
The plagis of the North by lond and see.
To Wales fled the cristianitee
Of olde Bretons, dwelling in this ile ;
Ther was hir refuge for the mene while.

But yet n'ere cristen Bretons so exiled,
 That ther n'ere som which in hir privitee
 Honoured Crist, and hethen folk begiled;
 And neigh the castle swiche ther dwelten three: 4970
 That on of hem was blind, and might not see,
 But it were with thilke eyen of his minde,
 With which men mowen see whan they ben blinde.

Bright was the sonne, as in that sommers day,
 For which the constable and his wif also
 And Custance, han ytake the righte way
 Toward the see, a furlong way or two,
 To plaien, and to romen to and fro;
 And in hir walk this blinde man they mette,
 Croked and olde, with eyen fast yshette. 4980

In the name of Crist (cried this blinde Breton)
 Dame Hermegild, yeve me my sight again.
 This lady wexe afraied of that soun,
 Lest that hire hufbond, shortly for to fain,
 Wold hire for Jesu Cristes love have flain,
 Til Custance made hire bold, and bad hire werche
 The will of Crist, as doughter of holy cherche.

The constable wexe abashed of that sight,
 And sayde; What amounteth all this fare?

Custance

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 197

Custance answered ; Sire, it is Cristes might, 4990
That helpeth folk out of the fendes snare :
And so ferforth she gan our lay declare,
That she the constable, er that it were eve,
Converted, and on Crist made him beleve.

This constable was not lord of the place
Of which I speke, ther as he Custance fond,
But kept it strongly many a winter space,
Under Alla, king of Northumberlond,
That was ful wise, and worthy of his hond
Againe the Scottes, as men may wel here ; 5000
But tourne I wol againe to my matere.

Sathan, that ever us waiteth to begile,
Saw of Custance all hire perfectioun, ^h
And cast anon how he might quite hire wile,
And made a yonge knight, that dwelt in that toun,
Love hire so hote of foule affectioun,
That veraily him thought that he shuld spille,
But he of hire might ones han his wille.

He woeth hire, but it availeth nought,
She wolde do no finne by no wey : 5010
And for despit, he compassed his thought
To maken hire on shameful deth to dey.

198 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

He waiteth whan the constable is away,
And prively upon a night he crepte
In Hermegildes chambre while she slepte.

Wery, forwaked in hire orifons,
Slepeth Cufstance, and Hermegilde also.
This knight, thurgh Sathanas temptations,
All softely is to the bed ygo,
And cut the throte of Hermegilde atwo, 5020
And layd the bloody knif by dame Cufstance,
And went his way, ther God yeve him mischance.

Sone after cometh this constable home again,
And eke Alla, that king was of that lond,
And saw his wife despitoufly yslain,
For which ful oft he wept and wrong his hond;
And in the bed the bloody knif he fond
By dame Cufstance, alas! what might she say?
For veray wo hire wit was all away.

To king Alla was told all this mischance, 5030
And eke the time, and wher, and in what wise,
That in a ship was fonden this Cufstance,
As here before ye han herd me devise:
The kinges herte of pitee gan agrise,
Whan he saw so benigne a creature
Falle in disese and in misaventure.

For

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.. 199

For as the lamb toward his deth is brought,
So stant this innocent befor the king :
This false knight, that hath this treson wrought,
Bereth hire in hond that she hath don this thing : 5040
But natheles ther was gret murmuring
Among the peple, and sayn they cannot gesse
That she had don so gret a wickednesse.

For they han seen hire ever so vertuous,
And loving Hermegild right as hire lif :
Of this bare witnesse everich in that hous,
Save he that Hermegild flow with his knif :
This gentil king hath caught a gret motif
Of this witness, and thought he wold enquire
Deper in this cas, trouthe for to lere. 5050

Alas ! Custance, thou hast no champion,
Ne fighten canst thou not, so wala wa !
But he that starf for our redemption,
And bond Sathan, and yet lith ther he lay,
So be thy stronge champion this day :
For but if Crist on thee miracle kithe,
Withouten gilt thou shalt be flaine as swithe.

She fet hire down on knees, and thus she sayde ;
Immortal God, that favedest Sufanne

Fro false blame, and thou merciful mayde, 5060
 Mary I mene, doughter to seint Anne,
 Beforn whos child angels singen Osanne,
 If I be gilteles of this felonie,
 My focour be, or elles shal I die.

Have ye not seen somtime a pale face
 (Among a prees) of him that hath ben lad
 Toward his deth, wher as he geteth no grace,
 And swiche a colour in his face hath had,
 Men mighten know him that was so bestad,
 Amonges all the faces in that route, 5070
 So stant Custance, and loketh hire aboute.

O quenes living in prosperitee,
 Ducheesses, and ye ladies everich on,
 Haveth som routhe on hire adversitee;
 An emperoures doughter stant alone;
 She hath no wight to whom to make hire mone;
 O blood real, that stondest in this drede,
 Fer ben thy frendes in thy grete nede.

This Alla king hath swiche compassioun,
 As gentil herte is fulfilled of pitee, 5080
 That fro his eyen ran the water down.
 Now hastily do fecche a book, quod he;

And

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 201

And if this knight wol sweren, how that she
This woman flow, yet wol we us avise,
Whom that we wol that shal ben our justice.

A Breton book, written with Evangiles,
Was fet, and on this book he swore anon
She giltif was, and in the mene whiles
An hond him smote upon the nekke bone,
That doun he fell at ones as a stone : 5090
And both his eyen brost out of his face
In fight of every body in that place,

A vois was herd, in general audience,
That sayd ; Thou hast defclandred gilteles
The doughter of holy chirche in high presence ;
Thus hast thou don, and yet hold I my pees.
Of this mervaille agast was all the prees,
As mased folk they stonden everich on
For drede of wreche, save Custance alone.

Gret was the drede and eke the repentance 5100
Of hem that hadden wronge suspection
Upon this fely innocent Custance ;
And for this miracle, in conclusion,
And by Custances mediation,
The king, and many another in that place,
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace.

This

202 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

This false knight was slain for his untrouthe
 By judgement of Alla hastily;
 And yet Custance had of his deth gret routhe;
 And after this Jesus of his mercy 5110
 Made Alla wedden ful solempnely
 This holy woman, that is so bright and shene,
 And thus hath Crist ymade Custance a quene.

But who was woful (if I shal not lie)
 Of this wedding but Donegild and no mo,
 The kinges mother, ful of tyrannie?
 Hire thoughte hire cursed herte braft atwo;
 She wolde not that hire sone had do so;
 Hire thoughte a despit, that he shulde take
 So strange a creature unto his make. 5120

Me list not of the chaf ne of the stre
 Maken so long a tale, as of the corn.
 What shulde I tellen of the realtee
 Of this mariage, or which cours goth beforne,
 Who bloweth in a trompe or in an horn?
 The fruit of every tale is for to say;
 They ete and drinke, and dance, and sing, and play.

They gon to bed, as it was skill and right,
 For though that wives ben ful holy thinges,
 They

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 203

They moften take in patience a night 5130
Swiche maner necessaries, as ben plesinges
To folk that han ywedded hem with ringes,
And lay a lite hir holinesse aside
As for the time, it may no bet betide.

On hire he gat a knave childe anon,
And to a bishop, and his constable eke
He toke his wif to kepe, whan he is gon
To Scotland ward, his fomen for to seke.
Now faire Custance, that is so humble and meke,
So long is gon with childe til that still 5140
She halt hire chambre, abiding Cristes will.

The time is come, a knave child she bere ;
Mauricius at the fontstone they him calle.
This constable doth forth come a messager,
And wrote unto his king that cleped was Alle,
How that this blisful tiding is befallle,
And other tidings spedeful for to say.
He hath the lettre, and forth he goth his way.

This messager, to don his advantage,
Unto the kinges mother rideth fwithre, 5150
And salueth hire ful faire in his langage.
Madame, quod he, ye may be glad and blithe,
And thanken God an hundred thousand fithe ;
My

My lady quene hath child, withouten doute,
To joye and blisse of all this regne aboute.

Lo here the lettre feled of this thing,
That I most bere in all the hast I may :
If ye wol ought unto your sone the king,
I am your servant bothe night and day.
Donegilde answerd, As now at this time nay; 5160
But here I wol all night thou take thy rest,
To-morwe wol I say thee what me left.

This messager drank sadly ale and wine,
And stolen were his lettres prively
Out of his box, while he slept as a swine;
And contrefeted was ful subtilly
Another lettre, wrought ful finfully,
Unto the king directe of this matere
Fro his constable, as ye shal after here.

This lettre spake, the quene delivered was 5170
Of so horrible a fendliche creature,
That in the castle non so hardy was
That any while dorste therein endure :
The mother was an elfe by aventure
Ycome, by charmes or by forcerie,
And everich man hateth hire compaignie.

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 205

Wo was this king whan he this lettre had sein,
But to no wight he told his forwes fore,
But of his owen hand he wrote again ;
Welcome the sonde of Crist for evermore 5180
To me, that am now lerned in his lore :
Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy plesance,
My lust I put all in thyn ordinance.

Kepeth this child, al be it foule or faire,
And eke my wif, unto min home coming :
Crist whan him list may fenden me an heire,
More agreable than this to my liking.
This lettre he seled, prively weping,
Which to the messager was taken sone,
And forth he goth, ther is no more to done. 5190

O messager fulfilled of dronkenesse,
Strong is thy breth, thy limmes faltren ay,
And thou bewreiest alle secrenesse ;
Thy mind is lorne, thou janglest as a jay ;
Thy face is tourned in a new array ;
Ther dronkenesse regneth in any route,
Ther is no conseil hid withouten doute.

O Donegild, I ne have non English digne
Unto thy malice, and thy tirannie :

And

And therfore to the fende I thee resigne, 5200
 Let him enditen of thy traitorie.
 Fy mannish, fy; o nay by God I lie;
 Fy fendliche spirit, for I dare wel telle,
 Though thou here walke, thy spirit is in helle.

This messager cometh fro the king again,
 And at the kinges modres court he light,
 And she was of this messager ful fayn,
 And plesed him in all that ever she might.
 He dranke, and wel his girdel underpight;
 He slepeth, and he snoreth in his gife 5210
 All night, until the sonne gan arise.

Eft were his lettres stolen everich on,
 And contrefeted lettres in this wise.
 The king commanded his constable anon
 Up peine of hanging and of high jewise,
 That he ne shulde soffren in no wise
 Custance within his regne for to abide
 Three daies and a quarter of a tide;

But in the same ship as he hire fond,
 Hire and hire yonge sone, and all hire gere 5220
 He shulde put, and croude hire fro the lond,
 And charge hire, that she never eft come there.

O my

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 207

O my Custance, wel may thy ghost have fere,
And sleping in thy dreame ben in penance,
Whan Donegild cast all this ordinance.

This messager on morwe whan he awoke,
Unto the castel halt the nexte way ;
And to the constable he the lettre toke ;
And whan that he this pitous lettre sey,
Ful oft he sayd alas, and wala wa ; 5230
Lord Crist, quod he, how may this world endure ?
So ful of finne is many a creature.

O mighty God, if that it be thy will,
Sin thou art rightful juge, how may it be
That thou wolt soffren innocence to spill,
And wicked folk regne in prosperitee ?
A good Custance, alas ! so wo is me,
That I mote be thy turmentour, or dey
On shames deth, ther is non other wey.

Wepen both yong and old in al that place, 5240
Whan that the king this cursed lettre sent :
And Custance with a dedly pale face
The fourthe day toward the ship she went :
But natheles she taketh in good entent
The will of Crist, and kneling on the strond
She sayde, Lord, ay welcome be thy sond.

He

208 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

He that me kepte fro the false blame,
While I was in the lond amonges you,
He can me kepe fro harme and eke fro shame
In the salt fee, although I se not how : 5250
As strong as ever he was, he is yet now,
In him trust I, and in his mother dere,
That is to me my fail and eke my ftere.

Hire litel child lay weping in hire arm,
And kneeling pitoufly to him she said,
Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee no harm :
With that hire couverchief of hire hed she braid,
And over his litel eyen she it laid,
And in hire arme she lulleth it ful fast,
And into the heven hire eyen up she cast. 5260

Mother, quod she, and mayden bright Marie,
Soth is, that thurgh womannes eggement
Mankind was lorne, and damned ay to die,
For which thy child was on a crois yrent :
Thy blisful eyen saw all his turment,
Than is ther no comparifon betwene
Thy wo, and any wo man may sustene.

Thou saw thy child yslain before thin eyen,
And yet now liveth my litel child parfay :

Now

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 269

Now, lady bright, to whom all woful crien, 5270
 Thou glory of womanhed, thou faire may,
 Thou haven of refute, bright sterre of day,
 Rew on my child, that of thy gentilleſſe
 Rewest on every rewful in distreſſe.

O litel child, alas ! what is thy gilt,
 That never wroughtest sinne as yet parde ?
 Why wol thin harde father have thee spilt ?
 O mercy, dere constable, (quod she)
 As let my litel child dwell here with thee :
 And if thou darst not saven him fro blame, 5280
 So kisse him ones in his fadres name.

Therwith she loketh backward to the lond,
 And saide ; Farewel, housbond routeles !
 And up she rist, and walketh down the strond
 Toward the ship, hire foloweth all the prees :
 And ever she praieth hire child to hold his pees,
 And taketh hire leve, and with an holy entent
 She bleſſeth hire, and into the ship she went.

Vitailed was the ship, it is no drede,
 Habundantly for hire a ful long space : 5290
 And other necessaries that shuld nede
 She had ynow, heried be Goddes grace :
 For wind and wether, almighty God purchase,

210 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

And bring hire home, I can no better say,
But in the fee she driveth forth hire way.

Alla the king cometh home sone after this
Unto his castel, of the which I told,
And asketh wher his wif and his child is;
The constable gan about his herte cold,
And plainly all the matere he him told 5300
As ye han herd, I can tell it no better,
And shewed the king his fele and his letter;

And faide; Lord, as ye commanded me
Up peine of deth, so have I don certain.
This messager turmented was, til he
Moste beknowe, and tellen plat and plain,
Fro night to night in what place he had lain:
And thus by wit and subtil enquering
Imagined was by whom this harm gan spring.

The hand was knowen that the lettre wrote, 5310
And all the venime of this cursed dede;
But in what wise, certainly I n'ot.
The effect is this, that Alla out of drede
His moder slew, that moun men plainly rede,
For that she traitour was to hire ligeance:
Thus endeth this old Donsgild with meschance.

The

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 211

The forwe that this Alla night and day
Maketh for his wif and for his child also,
Ther is no tonge that it tellen may.
But now wol I agen to Cufance go, 5320
That fleteth in the see in peine and wo
Five yere and more, as liked Cristes fonde,
Or that hire fhip approched to the londe.

Under an hethen castel at the last,
(Of which the name in my text I not find)
Cufance and eke hire child the see up cast.
Almighty God, that faved all mankind,
Have on Cufance and on hire child fom mind,
That fallen is in hethen hond eftfone
In point to spill, as I fhall tell you fone. 5330

Doun fro the castel cometh ther many a wight
To gauren on this fhip, and on Cufance :
But shortly fro the castel on a night,
The lordes fteward (God yeve him mefchance)
A theef, that had reneyed our creance,
Came into the fhip alone, and faid, he wolde
Hire lemman be, whether fhe wolde or n'olde.

Wo was this wretched woman tho begon,
Hire childe cried, and fhe cried pitoufly :

P 2

But

212 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

But blisful Mary halpe hire right anon, 5340
 For with hire strogling wel and mightily
 The thief fell over bord al fodenly,
 And in the see he drenched for vengeance,
 And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Custance.

O foule lust of luxurie, lo thin ende,
 Nat only that thou faintest mannes mind,
 But veraily thou wolt his body shende.
 Th'ende of thy werk, or of thy lustes blind,
 Is complaining: how many may men find,
 That not for werk somtime, but for th'entent 5350
 To don this sinne, ben other slain or shent.

How may this weke woman han the strength
 Hire to defend again this renegade?
 O Goliath, unmesurable of length,
 How mighte David maken thee so mate?
 So yonge, and of armure so desolate,
 How dorst he loke upon thy dredful face?
 Wel may men seen it was but Goddes grace.

Who yaf Judith corage or hardinesse
 To fleen him Holofernes in his tent, 5360
 And to deliver out of wretchednesse
 The peple of God? I say for this entent,
 That right as God spirit of vigour sent

To

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 213

To hem, and saved hem out of meschance,
So sent he might and vigour to Custance.

Forth goth hire ship thurghout the narwe mouth
Of Jubaltare and Septe, driving alway,
Somtime West, and somtime North and South,
And somtime Est, ful many a wery day :
Til Cristes moder (bleffed be she ay) 5370
Hath shapen thurgh hire endeles goodnesse
To make an end of all hire hevinesse.

Now let us stint of Custance but a throw,
And speke we of the Romane emperour,
That out of Surrie hath by lettres knowe
The slaughter of cristen folk, and dishonour
Don to his doughter by a false traitour,
I mene the curfed wicked Soudanneffe,
That at the fest let fleen both more and lesse.

For which this emperour hath sent anon 5380
His fenatour, with real ordinance,
And other lordes, God wote, many on,
On Surriens to taken high vengeance :
They brennen, fleen, and bring hem to meschance
Ful many a day : but shortly this is th'ende,
Homward to Rome they shapen hem to wende.

This senatour repaireth with victorie
 To Rome ward, sayling ful really,
 And met the ship driving, as faith the storie,
 In which Custance sitteth ful pitously : 5390
 Nothing ne knew he what she was, ne why
 She was in swiche array, ne she wil sey
 Of hire estat, though that she shulde dey.

He bringeth hire to Rome, and to his wif
 He yaf hire, and hire yonge sone also ;
 And with the senatour she lad hire lif.
 Thus can our lady bringen out of wo
 Woful Custance, and many another mo :
 And longe time dwelled she in that place,
 In holy werkes ever, as was hire grace. 5400

The senatoures wif hire aunte was,
 But for all that she knew hire never the more :
 I wol no longer tarien in this cas,
 But to king Alla, which I spake of yore,
 That for his wif wepeth and siketh fore,
 I wol returne, and let I wol Custance
 Under the senatoures governance.

King Alla, which that had his moder slain,
 Upon a day fell in swiche repentance,

That

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 215

That if I shortly tellen shal and plain, 5410
To Rome he cometh to receive his penance,
And putte him in the popes ordinance
In high and low, and Jesu Crist besought,
Foryeve his wicked werkes that he had wrought.

The fame anon thurghout the teun is born,
How Alla king shal come on pilgrimage,
By herbergeours that wenten him beforne,
For which the fenatour, as was ufage,
Rode him againe, and many of his linage,
As wel to shewen his high magnificence, 5420
As to don any king a reverence.

Gret chere doth this noble fenatour
To king Alla, and he to him also;
Everich of hem doth other gret honour;
And so befell, that in a day or two
This fenatour is to king Alla go
To fest, and shortly, if I shal not lie,
Custances sone went in his compaignie.

Som men wold fain at requeste of Custance
This fenatour hath lad this child to feste : 5430
I may not tellen every circumstance,
Be as be may, ther was he at the leste :
But soth is this, that at his mothers heste

216 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE

Beforn Alla, during the metes space,
The child stood, loking in the kinges face.

This Alla king hath of this child gret wonder,
And to the senatour he said anon,
Whos is that faire child that stondeth yonder?
I n'ot, quod he, by God and by Seint John;
A moder he hath, but fader hath he non, 5440
That I of wote: but shortly in a ffound
He told Alla how that this child was found.

But God wot, quod this senatour also,
So vertuous a liver in all my lif
Ne saw I never, as she, ne herd of mo
Of worldly woman, maiden, widewe or wif:
I dare wel sayn hire hadde lever a knif
Thurghout hire brest, than ben a woman wikke,
Ther is no man coude bring hire to that prikke.

Now was this child as like unto Cufstance 5450
As possible is a creature to be:
This Alla hath the face in remembrance
Of dame Cufstance, and theron mused he,
If that the childes moder were aught she
That is his wif, and prively he fighte,
And sped him fro the table that he mighte,

Parfay,

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 217

Parfay, thought he, fantome is in min hed,
I ought to deme of skilful jugement,
That in the falte fee my wif is ded,
And afterward he made his argument; 5460
What wot I, if that Crist have hider sent
My wif by fee, as wel as he hire lent
To my contree, fro thennes that she went?

And after noon home with the fenatour
Goth Alla, for to see this wonder chance,
This fenatour doth Alla gret honour,
And hastily he sent after Cufance;
But trusteth wel, hire luste not to dance.
Whan that she wiste wherfore was that sonde,
Unnethe upon hire feet she mighte stonde. 5470

Whan Alla saw his wif, faire he hire grette,
And wept, that it was routhe for to see,
For at the firste look he on hire sette
He knew wel veraily that it was she;
And she for forwe, as domb stant as a tree:
So was hire herte shette in hire distresse,
Whan she remembered his unkindenesse.

Twies she fwouneth in his owen sight,
He wepeth and him excuseth pitoufly;

Now

218 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

Now God, quod he, and all his halwes bright 5480
 So wisly on my soule as have mercy,
 That of your harme as gilteles am I,
 As is Maurice my sone, so like your face,
 Elles the fend me fetche out of this place.

Long was the fobbing and the bitter peine,
 Or that hir woful hertes mighten cese,
 Gret was the pitee for to here hem pleine,
 Thurgh whiche pleintes gan hir wo encrese.
 I pray you all my labour to relese,
 I may not tell hir wo until to-morwe, 5490
 I am so wery for to speke of forwe.

But finally, whan that the soth is wist,
 That Alla gilteles was of hire wo,
 I trow an hundred times han they kist,
 And swiche a blisse is ther betwix hem two,
 That save the joye that lasteth evermo,
 Ther is non like, that any creature
 Hath seen or shal, while that the world may dure.

Tho praied she hire husbond mekely
 In releef of hire longe pitous pine, 5500
 That he wold pray hire fader specially,
 That of his magestee he wold encline
 To vouchesauf som day with him to dine :

She

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 219

She praied him eke, he shulde by no way
Unto hire fader no word of hire say.

Som men wold fayn, how that the child Maurice
Doth this message until this emperour :
But as I gesse, Alla was not so nice,
To him that is so soveraine of honour,
As he that is of cristen folk the flour, 5510
Send any child, but it is bet to deme
He went himself, and so it may wel seme.

This emperour hath granted gentilly
To come to dinner, as he him besoughte :
And wel rede I, he loked befily
Upon this child, and on his doughter thought.
Alla goth to his inne, and as him ought
Arraied for this feste in every wise,
As ferforth as his conning may suffice.

The morwe came, and Alla gan him dresse, 5520
And eke his wif, this emperour to mete :
And forth they ride in joye and in gladnesse,
And whan she saw hire fader in the strete,
She light adoun and falleth him to fete.
Fader, quod she, your yonge child Custance
Is now ful clene out of your remembrance.

I am

210 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

I am your doughter, your Cufance, quod ſhe,
That whilom ye han ſent into Surrie :
It am I, fader, that in the falte ſee
Was put alone, and dampned for to die. 553^o
Now, goode fader, I you mercy crie,
Send me no more into non hetheneſſe,
But thanketh my lord here of his kindeneſſe.

Who can the pitous joye tellen all
Betwix hem thre, ſin they ben thus ymette ?
But of my tale make an ende I ſhal,
The day goth faſt, I wol no longer lette.
Thiſe glade folk to dinner ben yſette,
In joy and bliſſe at mete I let hem dwell,
A thouſand fold wel more than I can tell. 554^o

This child Maurice was ſithen emperour
Made by the pope, and lived criſtenly,
To Criſtes chirche did he gret honour :
But I let all his ſtorie paſſen by,
Of Cuſtance is my tale ſpecially,
In the olde Romane geſtes men may find
Maurices liſ, I bere it not in mind.

This king Alla, whan he his time fey,
With his Cuſtance, his holy wiſ ſo fwete,

To

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE. 221

To Englonde ben they come the righte wey, 5550
Ther as they live in joye and in quiete.
But litel while it lasteth I you hete,
Joye of this world for time wol not abide,
Fro day to night it changeth as the tide.

Who lived ever in swiche delite o day,
That him ne meved other conscience,
Or ire, or talent, or som kin affray,
Envie, or pride, or passion, or offence?
I ne say but for this end this sentence,
That litel while in joye or in plesance 5560
Lasteth the blisse of Alla with Custance.

For deth, that taketh of hie and low his rente,
Whan passed was a yere, even as I gesse,
Out of this world this king Alla he hente,
For whom Custance hath ful gret hevinesse.
Now let us praie God his soule blesse :
And dame Custance finally to say,
Toward the toun of Rome goth hire way.

To Rome is come this holy creature,
And findeth ther hire frendes hole and sound : 5570
Now is she scaped all hire aventure :
And whan that she hire fader hath yfound,
Doun on hire knees falleth she to ground,
Weping

222 THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

Weping for tenderneſſe in herte blithe
She herieth God an hundred thouſand ſithe.

In vertue and in holy almeſſe dede
They liven alle, and never aſonder wende;
Till deth departeth hem, this liſ they lede:
And fareth now wel, my tale is at an ende.
Now Jeſu Criſt, that of his might may ſende 5580
Joye after wo, governe us in his grace,
And kepe us alle that ben in this place.

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

EXPERIENCE, though non auctoritee
Were in this world, is right ynough for me
To ſpeke of wo that is in mariage:
For, lordings, ſin I twelf yere was of age,
(Thanked be God that is eterne on live)
Huſbondes at chirche dore have I had five,
(If I ſo often might han wedded be)
And all were worthy men in hir degree. 5590

But me was told, not longe time agon is,
That ſithen Criſt ne went never but onis
To wedding, in the Cane of Galilee,
That by that ilke enſample taught he me,
That I ne ſhulde wedded be but ones.
Lo, herke eke, which a ſharpe word for the nones
Beside

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 223

Beside a welle Jesu God and man
Spake in represe of the Samaritan :
Thou hast yhadde five husbonds, sayde he ;
And thilke man, that now hath wedded thee, 5600
Is not thyn husbond : thus said he certain,
What that he ment therby, I can not sain.
But that I aske, why that the fishe man
Was non husbond to the Samaritan ?
How many might she have in mariage ?
Yet herd I never tellen in min age
Upon this noumbre diffinitioun ;
Men may devine, and glosen up and down.

But wel I wot, expresse withouten lie
God bad us for to wex and multiplie ; 5610
That gentil text can I wel understond.
Eke wel I wot, he sayd, that min husbond
Shuld leve fader and moder, and take to me ;
But of no noumbre mention made he
Of bigamie or of octogamie ;
Why shuld men than speke of it vilanie ?

Lo here the wise king Dan Salomon,
I trow he hadde wives mo than on,
(As wolde God it lesful were to me
To be refreshed half so oft as he) 5620
Which a gift of God had he for alle his wives ?
No man hath swiche, that in this world on live is.

God

224 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

God wot, this noble king, as to my witte,
 The firste night had many a mery fitte
 With eche of hem, so wel was him on live.
 Blessed be God that I have wedded five,
 Welcome the sixthe whan that ever he shall.
 For sith I wol not kepe me chaste in all,
 Whan min husbond is fro the world ygon,
 Som cristen man shal wedden me anon. 5630
 For than the apostle saith, that I am fre
 To wedde a goddeshalf wher it liketh me.
 He saith, that to be wedded is no sinne;
 Better is to be wedded than to brinne.

What rekketh me though folk say vilanie
 Of shrewed Lamech, and his bigamie?
 I wot wel Abraham was an holy man,
 And Jacob eke, as fer as ever I can,
 And eche of hem had wives mo than two,
 And many another holy man also. 5640
 Wher can ye seen in any maner age
 That highe God defended mariage
 By expresse word? I pray you telleth me,
 Or wher commanded he virginitee?

I wot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
 The apostle, whan he spake of maidenhede,
 He said, that precept therof had he non:
 Men may conseille a woman to ben on,

But

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 225

But conseilling is no commandement ;
He put it in our owen jugement. 5650

For hadde God commanded maidenhede,
Than had he dampned wedding out of drede ;
And certes, if ther were no fede yfowe,
Virginitee than wherof shuld it growe ?

Poule dorste not commanden at the lest
A thing, of which his maister yaf non hest.
The dart is sette up for virginitee,
Catch who so may, who renneth best let see.
But this word is not take of every wight,
But ther as God wol yeve it of his might. 5660

I wot wel that the apostle was a maid,
But natheles, though that he wrote and said,
He wold that every wight were swiche as he,
All n'is but conseil to virginitee.

And for to ben a wif he yaf me leve,
Of indulgence, so n'is it non reprove
To wedden me, if that my make die,
Withoute exception of bigamie ;
All were it good no woman for to touche,
(He ment as in his bed or in his couche) 5670
For peril is both fire and tow to assemble ;
Ye know what this ensample may resemble.

This is all and som, he held virginitee
More parfit than wedding in freelte :

(Freeltee clepe I, but if that he and she
 Wold lede hir lives all in chastitee)
 I graunt it wel, I have of non envie,
 Who maidenhed preferre to bigamie;
 It liketh hem to be clene in body and goft :
 Of min estat I wol not maken boft. 5680

For wel ye know, a lord in his household
 Ne hath nat every vessell all of gold :
 Som ben of tree; and don hir lord service.
 God clepeth folk to him in sondry wise,
 And everich hath of God a propre gift,
 Som this, fom that, as that him liketh shift.
 Virginitee is gret perfection,
 And continence eke with devotion :
 But Crist, that of perfection is welle,
 Ne bade not every wight he shuld go felle 5690
 All that he had, and yeve it to the poure,
 And in swiche wise folow him and his lore :
 He spake to hem that wold live parfitly,
 And, lordings, (by your leve) that am nat I;
 I wol bestow the flour of all myn age
 In th' actes and the fruit of mariage.

Tell me also, to what conclusion
 Were membres made of generation,
 And of so parfit wise a wight ywrought?
 Trusteth me wel, they were nat made for nought.
 Glote

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 217

Glose who so wol, and say bothe up and doun,
That they were made for purgatioun
Of urine, and of other thinges finale,
And eke to know a female from a male :
And for non other cause ? say ye no ?
The experience wot wel it is not so.
So that the clerkes be not with me wroth,
I say this, that they makéd ben for both,
This is to sayn, for office, and for ese
Of engendrure, ther we not God displese. 5710

Why shuld men elles in hir bookes sette,
That man shal yelden to his wif hire dette ?
Now wherwith shuld he make his payement,
If he ne used his sely instrument ?
Than were they made upon a creature
To purge urine, and eke for engendrure.

But I say not that every wight is hold,
That hath swiche harneis as I to you told,
To gon and usen hem in engendrure ;
Than shuld men take of chastitee no cure. 5720

Crist was a maide, and shapen as a man,
And many a feint, fith that this world began,
Yet lived they ever in parfit chastitee.

I n'ill envie with no virginitee.

Let hem with bred of pured whete be fed,
And let us wivés eten barly bred.

Q 2

And

228 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

And yet with barly bred, Mark tellen can,
 Our Lord Jesu refreshed many a man.
 In swiche estat as God hath cleped us,
 I wol persever, I n'am not precious, 5730
 In wifhode wol I use min instrument
 As frely as my maker hath it sent.
 If I be dangerous God yeve me forwe,
 Min husbond shal it have both even and morwe,
 Whan that him list come forth and pay his dette.
 An husbond wol I have, I wol not lette,
 Which shal be both my dettour and my thrall,
 And have his tribulation withall
 Upon his flesh, while that I am his wif.
 I have the power during all my lif 5740
 Upon his propre body, and nat he;
 Right thus the apostle told it unto me,
 And bad our husbonds for to love us wel;
 All this sentence me liketh every del.

Up stert the pardoner, and that anon;
 Now, dame, quod he, by God and by Seint John,
 Ye ben a noble prechour in this cas.
 I was about to wed a wif, alas!
 What? shuld I bie it on my flesh so dere?
 Yet had I lever wed no wif to-yere. 5750

Abide, quod she, my tale is not begonne.
 Nay, thou shalt drinken of another tonne

Er

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 229

Er that I go, shal favour worfe than ale.
And whan that I have told thee forth my tale
Of tribulation in mariage,
Of which I am expert in all min age,
(This is to sayn myself hath ben the whippe)
Than maieft thou chesen wheder thou wolt sippe
Of thilke tonne, that I shal abroche.
Beware of it, er thou to neigh approche. 5760
For I shal tell ensamples mo than ten :
Who so that n'ill beware by other men
By him shal other men corrected be :
Thise same wordes writeth Ptholomee,
Rede in his Almageste, and take it there.

Dame, I wold pray you, if your will it were,
Sayde this pardoner, as ye began,
Tell forth your tale, and spareth for no man,
And techeth us yonge men of your practike.

Gladly, quod she, fin that it may you like. 5770
But that I pray to all this compaignie,
If that I speke after my fantasie,
As taketh not a greefe of that I say,
For min entente is not but for to play.

Now, fires, than wol I tell you forth my tale.
As ever mote I drinken win or ale
I shal say soth, the husbondes that I had
As three of hem were good, and two were bad.

230 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

The three were goode men and riche and olde.
 Unnethes mighten they the statute holde, 5780
 In which that they were bounden unto me.
 Ye wot wel what I mene of this parde.
 As God me helpe, I laugh whan that I thinke,
 How pitouſly a-night I made hem ſwinke,
 But by my fay, I tolde of it no ſtore :
 They had me yeven hir lond and hir treſore,
 Me neded not do lenger diligence
 To winn hir love, or don hem reverence.
 They loved me ſo wel by God above,
 That I ne tolde no deintee of hir love. 5790
 A wiſe woman wol beſie hire ever in on
 To geten hir love, ther as ſhe hath non,
 But ſith I had hem holly in min hond,
 And that they hadde yeven me all hir lond,
 What ſhuld I taken kepe hem for to pleſe,
 But it were for my profit, or min eſe ?
 I ſet hem ſo a-werke by my fay,
 That many a night they ſongen wala wa.
 The bacon was not fet for hem, I trow,
 That ſom men have in Eſſex at Donnow. 5800
 I goyerned hem ſo wel after my lawe,
 That eche of hem ful bliſful was and ſawe
 To bringen me gay thinges fro the feyre,
 They were ful glade whan I ſpake hem fayre,

For

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 231

For God it wot, I chidde hem spitoufly.

Now herkeneth how I bare me proprely.

Ye wife wives, that can understond,
Thus shul ye speke, and bere hem wrong on hond,
For half so boldely can ther no man
Sweren and lien as a woman can. 5810

(I say not this by wives that ben wise,
But if it be whan they hem misavise.)

A wise wif if that she can hire good,
Shal beren hem on hond the cow is wood,
And taken witnesse of hire owen mayd
Of hir assent: but herkeneth how I sayd.

Sire olde kaynard, is this thin aray?
Why is my neigheboures wif so gay?
She is honoured over al wher she goth,
I sit at home, I have no thrifty cloth. 5820
What dost thou at my neigheboures hous?
Is she so faire? art thou so amorous?
What rownest thou with our maide? *benedicite*,
Sire olde lechour, let thy japes be.

And if I have a gossib, or a frend,
(Withouten gilt) thou chideest as a fend,
If that I walke or play unto his hous.

Thou comest home as dronken as a mous,
And prechest on thy benche with evil prefe:
Thou sayst to me, it is a gret meschiefe 5830

Q 4

To

232 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

To wed a poure woman, for costage :
 And if that she be riche of high parage,
 Than sayst thou, that it is a tourmentrie
 To soffre hire pride and hire melancolie.
 And if that she be faire, thou veray knave,
 Thou sayst that every holour wol hire have.
 She may no while in chastitee abide,
 That is assailed upon every side.
 Thou sayst som folk desire us for richeffe,
 Som for our shape, and som for our fairnesse, 5840
 And som, for she can other sing or dance,
 And som for gentillesse and daliance,
 Som for hire hondes and hire armes smale :
 Thus goth all to the devil by thy tale.
 Thou sayst, men may not kepe a castel wal,
 It may so long assailed be over al.
 And if that she be foul, thou sayst, that she
 Coveteth every man that she may see ;
 For as a spaniel, she wol on him lepe,
 Til she may finden som man hire to chepe. 5850
 Ne non so grey goos goth ther in the lake,
 (As sayst thou) that wol ben withoute a make.
 And sayst, it is an hard thing for to welde
 A thing, that no man wol his thanks helde.
 Thus sayst thou, lorel, whan thou gost to bed,
 And that no wise man nedeth for to wed,

Ne

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 233

Ne no man that entendeth unto heven.
With wilde thonder dint and firy leven
Mote thy welked nekke be to-broke.

Thou sayst, that dropping houfes, and eke smoke,
And chiding wives maken men to flee 5861
Out of hir owen hous; a, *benedicite*,
What aileth swiche an old man for to chide?

Thou sayst, we wives wol our vices hide,
Til we be fast, and than we wol hem shewe.
Wel may that be a proverbe of a shrewe.

Thou sayst, that oxen, asses, hors, and houndes,
They ben assaied at diverse stoundes,
Basines, lavoures, or that men hem bie,
Spones, stooles, and all swiche hufbondrie, 5870
And so ben pottes, clothes, and aray,
But folk of wives maken non assay,
Til they ben wedded, olde dotard shrewe!
And than, sayst thou, we wol our vices shewe.

Thou sayst also, that it displeseth me,
But if that thou wolt preisen my beautee,
And but thou pore alway upon my face,
And clepe me faire dame in every place;
And but thou make a feste on thilke day
That I was borne, and make me fresh and gay; 5880
And but thou do to my norice honour,
And to my chamberere within my bour,

And

234 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

And to my faders folk, and myn allies;
Thus sayst thou, olde barel ful of lies.

And yet also of our prentis Jankin,
For his crispe here, shining as gold so fin,
And for he squiereth me both up and down,
Yet hast thou caught a false suspicion:
I wol him nat, though thou were ded to-morwe.

But tell me this, why hidest thou with forwe 5890
The keies of thy cheft away fro me?
It is my good as wel as thin parde.
What, wenest thou make an idiot of our dame?
Now by that Lord that cleped is Seint Jame,
Thou shalt nat bothe, though that thou were wood,
Be maister of my body and of my good,
That on thou shalt forgo maugre thin eyen.
What helpeth it of me to enquire and spien?
I trow thou woldest locke me in thy cheste.
Thou shuldest say, Fayrwif, go wher thee leste; 5900
Take your disport; I wol nat leve no tales;
I know you for a trewe wif, dame Ales.

We love no man, that taketh kepe or charge
Wher that we gon, we wol be at our large.
Of alle men ybleffed mote he be
The wise astrologien Dan Ptholomee,
That sayth this proverbe in his Almageste:
Of alle men his wisdom is higheste,

That

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 235

That rekketh not who hath the world in hond.

By this proverbe thou shalt wel understond, 5910

Have thou ynough, what thar thee rekke or care

How merily that other folkes fare?

For certes, olde dotard, by your leve,

Ye shullen have queint right ynough at eve.

He is to gret a nigard that wol werne

A man to light a candel at his lanterne;

He shal have never the lesse light parde.

Have thou ynough, thee thar not plainen thee.

Thou sayst also, if that we make us gay

With clothing and with precious array, 5920

That it is peril of our chastitee.

And yet with forwe thou enforcest thee,

And sayst thise wordes in the apostles name:

In habit made with chastitee and shame

Ye women shul appareile you, (quod he)

And nat in treffed here, and gay perrie,

As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche.

After thy text, ne after thy rubriche

I wol not work as mochel as a gnat.

Thou sayst also, I walke out like a cat; 5930

For who so wolde fenge the cattles skin,

Than wol the cat wel dwellen in hire in;

And if the cattles skin be fleke and gay,

She wol nat dwellen in hous half a day,

But

236 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

But forth she wol, or any day be dawed,
 To shew hire skin, and gon a caterwawed.
 This is to say, if I be gay, fire shrewe,
 I wol renne out, my borel for to shewe.
 Sire olde fool, what helpeth thee to spien?
 Though thou pray Argus with his hundred eyen 5940
 To be my wardecorps, as he can best,
 In faith he shal not kepe me but me lest:
 Yet coude I make his berd, so mote I the.

Thou sayest eke, that ther ben thinges thre,
 Which thinges gretly troublen all this erthe,
 And that no wight ne may endure the ferthe:
 O lese fire shrewe, Jesu short thy lif.

Yet prechest thou, and sayst, an hateful wif
 Yrekened is for on of thise meschances.
 Be ther non other maner resemblances 5950
 That ye may liken your parables to,
 But if a fely wif be on of tho?

Thou likenest eke womans love to helle,
 To barrein lond, ther water may not dwelle.

Thou likenest it also to wilde fire;
 The more it brenneth, the more it hath desire
 To consume every thing, that brent wol be.

Thou sayest, right as wormes shende a tre,
 Right so a wif destroieth hire hufbond;
 This knowen they that ben to wives bond. 5960
 Lordings,

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 237

Lordings, right thus, as ye han understond,
 Bare I stifly min old husbondes on hond,
 That thus they faiden in hir dronkenesse ;
 And all was false, but as I toke witnesse
 On Jankin, and upon my nece also.
 O Lord, the peine I did hem, and the wo,
 Ful gilteles, by Goddes swete pine ;
 For as an hors, I coude bite and whine ;
 I coude plain, and I was in the gilt,
 Or elles oftentime I had ben spilt. 5970
 Who so first cometh to the mill, first grint ;
 I plained first, so was our werre ystint.
 They were ful glad to excusen hem ful blive
 Of thing, the which they never agilt hir live.
 Of wenches wold I beren hem on hond,
 Whan that for fike unnethes might they stond,
 Yet tikeled I his herte for that he
 Wend that I had of him so gret chiertee :
 I swore that all my walking out by night
 Was for to espien wenches that he dight : 5980
 Under that colour had I many a mirth.
 For all swiche wit is yeven us in our birth ;
 Deceite, weping, spinning, God hath yeven
 To women kindly, while that they may liven.
 And thus of o thing I may avaunten me,
 At th'ende I had the beter in eche degree,

By

238 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

By sleight or force, or by som maner thing,
 As by continual murmur or grutching,
 Namely a-bed, ther hadden they meschance,
 Ther wold I chide, and don hem no plesance : 5990
 I wold no lenger in the bed abide,
 If that I felt his arme over my side,
 Til he had made his raunson unto me,
 Than wold I soffre him do his nicetee.
 And therfore every man this tale I tell,
 Winne who so may, for all is for to fell :
 With empty hond men may no haukes lure,
 For winning wold I all his lust endure,
 And maken me a feined appetit,
 And yet in bacon had I never delit : 6000
 That maked me that ever I wold hem chide.
 For though the pope had sitten hem beside,
 I wold not spare hem at hir owen bord,
 For by my trouthe I quitte hem word for word.
 As helpe me veray God omnipotent,
 Tho I right now shuld make my testament,
 I ne owe hem not a word, that it n'is quit,
 I brought it so abouten by my wit,
 That they must yeve it up, as for the best,
 Or elles had we never ben in rest. 6010
 For though he loked as a wood leon,
 Yet shuld he faille of his conclusion.

Than

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 239

Than wold I say, now, goode lefe, take kepe.
 How mekely loketh Wilkin oure shepe !
 Come ner my spoufe, and let me ba thy cheke.
 Ye fhulden be al patient and meke,
 And han a fwete spiced confcience,
 Sith ye fo preche of Jobes patience.
 Suffreth alway fin ye fo wel can preche,
 And but ye do, certain we fhall you teche 6020
 That it is faire to han a wif in pees.
 On of us two moſte bowen doutelees :
 And, fith a man is more reſonable
 Than woman is, ye moſten ben fuffrable.
 What aileth you to grutchen thus and grone ?
 Is it for ye wold have my queint alone ?
 Why take it all : lo, have it every del.
 Peter, I fhrew you but ye love it wel.
 For if I wolde fell my *belle choſe*,
 I coude walke as freſhe as is a roſe, 6030
 But I wol kepe it for your owen toth.
 Ye be to blame, by God, I ſay you ſoth.

Swiche maner wordes hadden we on hond.
 Now wol I ſpeken of my fourthe huſbond.

My fourthe huſbonde was a revellour,
 This is to ſayn, he had a paramour,
 And I was yonge and ful of ragerie,
 Stibborne and ſtrong, and joly as a pie.

Tho

240 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

Tho coude I dancen to an harpe smale,
 And sing ywis as any nightingale, 6040
 Whan I had dronke a draught of swete wine.
 Metellius, the foule cherle, the swine,
 That with a staf beraft his wif hire lif
 For she drank wine, though I had ben his wif,
 Ne shuld he not have daunted me fro drinke :
 And after wine of Venus most I thinke.

For al so fiker as cold engendreth hayl,
 A likerous mouth most han a likerous tayl.
 In woman vinolent is no defence,
 This knowen lechours by experience. 6050

But, lord Crist, whan that it remembreth me
 Upon my youth, and on my jolitee,
 It tikleth me about myn herte rote.
 Unto this day it doth myn herte bote,
 That I have had my world as in my time.
 But age, alas ! that all wol envenime,
 Hath me beraft my beautee and my pith :
 Let go, farewell, the devil go therwith.
 The flour is gon, ther n'is no more to tell,
 The bren, as I best may, now moste I sell. 6060
 But yet to be right mery wol I fond.
 Now forth to tellen of my fourthe husbond.

I say, I had in herte gret despit,
 That he of any other had delit ;

But

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 241

But he was quit by God and by Seint Joce :

I made him of the same wood a croce,

Not of my body in no foule manere,

But certainly I made folk swiche chere,

That in his owen grese I made him frie

For anger, and for veray jalousie.

6070

By God, in erth I was his purgatorie,

For which I hope his soule be in glorie.

For, God it wote, he fate ful oft and songe,

Whan that his sho ful bitterly him wronge.

Ther was no wight, save God and he, that wiste

In many a wise how fore that I him twiste.

He died whan I came fro Jerusalem,

And lith ygrave under the rode-beem :

All is his tombe not so curious

As was the sepulcre of him Darius,

6080

Which that Appelles wrought so sotelly.

It is but wast to bury hem preciously.

Let him farewell, God give his soule rest,

He is now in his grave and in his cheft.

Now of my fifthe husbonde wol I telle :

God let his soule never come in helle.

And yet was he to me the moste shrew,

That fele I on my ribbes all by rew,

And ever shal, unto min ending day.

But in our bed he was so fresh and gay,

6090

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And

242 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

And therewithall he coude so wel me glose,
 Whan that he wolde han my *belle chose*,
 That, though he had me bet on every bon,
 He coude win agen my love anon.
 I trow, I loved him the bet, for he
 Was of his love so dangerous to me.
 We wimmen han, if that I shal not lie,
 In this matere a queinte fantasie.
 Waite, what thing we may nat lightly have,
 Therafter wol we cry all day and crave. 6100
 Forbede us thing, and that desiren we;
 Prese on us fast, and thanne wol we flee.
 With danger uttren we all our chaffare;
 Gret prees at market maketh dere ware,
 And to gret chepe is holden at litel prife;
 This knoweth every woman that is wise.

My fifthe husbonde, God his soule bleffe,
 Which that I toke for love and no richesse,
 He somtime was a clerk of Oxenforde,
 And had left scole, and went at home at borde 6110
 With my goffib, dwelling in oure toun:
 God have hire soule, hire name was Alisoun.
 She knew my herte and all my privetee,
 Bet than our parish preeft, so mote I the.
 To hire bewried I my conseil all;
 For had my husbond pissed on a wall,

Or

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 243

Or don a thing that shuld have cost his lif,
To hire, and to another worthy wif,
And to my necè, which that I loved wel,
I wold have told his conseil every del. 6120
And so I did ful often, God it wote,
That made his face ful often red and hote
For veray shame, and blamed himself, for he
Had told to me so gret a privetee.

And so befell that ones in a Lent,
(So often times I to my goffib went,
For ever yet I loved to be gay,
And for to walke in March, April, and May
From hous to hous, to heren fondry tales)
That Jankin clerk, and my goffib dame Ales, 6130
And I myself, into the feldes went.
Myn husbond was at London all that Lent;
I had the better leiser for to pleie,
And for to see, and eke for to be seie
Of lusty folk; what wist I wher my grace
Was shapen for to be, or in what place?
Therfore made I my visitations
To vigilies, and to proceffions,
To prechings eke, and to thise pilgrimages,
To playes of miracles, and mariages, 6140
And wered upon my gay skarlet gites.
Thise wormes, ne thise mothes, ne thise mites

244 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

Upon my paraille frett hem never a del,
And wost thou why? for they were used wel.

Now wol I tellen forth what happed me :
I say, that in the feldes walked we,
Till trewely we had swiche daliance
This clerk and I, that of my purveance
I spake to him, and said him how that he,
If I were widewe, shulde wedden me. 6159
For certainly, I say for no bobance,
Yet was I never without purveance
Of mariage, ne of other thinges eke ;
I hold a mouses wit not worth a leke,
That hath but on hole for to sterren to,
And if that faille, than is all ydo.

I bare him on hond he had enchanted me ;
(My dame taughte me that subtiltee)
And eke I sayd, I mette of him all night,
He wold han slain me, as I lay upright, 6160
And all my bed was ful of veray blood ;
But yet I hope that ye shuln do me good :
For blood betokeneth gold, as me was taught.
And al was false, I dremed of him right naught,
But as I folwed ay my dames lore,
As wel of that as of other thinges more.

But now, sire, let me see, what shall I sain ?
A ha, by God I have my tale again.

Whan

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 245

Whan that my fourthe husbonde was on bere,
I wept algate and made a fory chere, 6170

As wives moten, for it is the usage,
And with my coverchefe covered my visage ;

But, for that I was purveyed of a make,
I wept but final, and that I undertake.

To chirche was myn husbond born a-morwe
With neigheboures that for him maden forewe,
And Jankin oure clerk was on of tho :

As helpe me God, whan that I saw him go
After the bere, me thought he had a paire
Of legges and of feet, so clene and faire, 6180

That all my herte I yave unto his hold.

He was, I trōw, a twenty winter old,

And I was fourty, if I shal say soth,

But yet I had alway a coltes toth.

Gat-tothed I was, and that became me wele,

I had the print of Seinte Venus sele.

As helpe me God, I was a lusty on,

And faire, and riche, and yonge, and wel begon :

And trewely, as min husbondes tolden me,

I had the beste queint that mighte be. 6190

For certes I am all venerian

In feling, and my herte is marcian :

Venus me yave my lust and likerousnesse,

And Mars yave me my sturdy hardinesse.

246 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

Min ascendent was Taure, and Mars therinne :
 Alas, alas, that ever love was finne !
 I folwed ay min inclination
 By vertue of my constellation :
 That made me that I coude nat withdraw
 My chambre of Venus from a good felaw. 6200
 Yet have I Martes merke upon my face,
 And also in another privee place.
 For God so wisly be my salvation,
 I loved never by no discretion,
 But ever folwed min appetit,
 All were he shorte, longe, blake, or white,
 I toke no kepe, so that he liked me,
 How poure he was, ne eke of what degree.

What shuld I saye ? but at the monthes ende
 This joly clerk Jankin, that was so hende, 6210
 Hath wedded me with gret solempnitee,
 And to him yave I all the lond and fee,
 That ever was me yeven therbefore :
 But afterward repented me ful sore.
 He n'olde suffre nothing of my list.
 By God he smote me ones with his fist,
 For that I rent out of his book a lese,
 That of the froke myn ere wex al dese.
 Stibborne I was, as is a leoneffe,
 And of my tonge a veray jangleresse, 6220

And

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 247

And walke I wold, as I had don befor,
Fro hous to hous, although he had it sworn :
For which he oftentimes wolde preche,
And me of olde Romaine gestes teche.

How he Sulpitius Gallus left his wif,
And hire forfoke for terme of all his lif,
Not but for open-heded he hire say
Loking out at his dore upon a day.

Another Romaine told he me by name,
That, for his wif was at a fommer gaine 6230
Without his weting, he forfoke hire eke.

And than wold he upon his Bible feke
That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste,
Wher he commandeth, and forbedeth faste,
Man shal not suffer his wif go roule aboute.

Than wold he say right thus withouten doute :
Who so that bildeth his hous all of falwes,
And pricketh his blind hors over the falwes,
And suffereth his wif to go seken halwes,
Is worthy to be honged on the galwes. 6240

But all for nought, I sette not an hawe
Of his proverbes, ne of his olde sawe ;
Ne I wold not of him corrected be.
I hate hem that my vices tellen me,
And so do mo of us (God wote) than I.
This made him wood with me all utterly ;

248 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

I n'olde not forbere him in no cas.

Now wol I say you soth by Seint Thomas,
Why that I rent out of his book a lefe,
For which he smote me, so that I was defe. 6250

He had a book, that gladly night and day
For his disport he wolde it rede alway,
He cleped it Valerie, and Theophrast,
And with that book he lough alway ful fast.
And eke ther was a clerk somtime at Rome,
A cardinal, that highte Seint Jerome,
That made a book again Jovinián,
Which book was ther, and eke Tertullian,
Crisippus, Trotula, and Helowis, 6260
That was abbesse not fer fro Paris;
And eke the paraboles of Salomon,
Ovdes art, and bourdes many on;
And alle thise were borden in o volume.
And every night and day was his custume
(Whan he had leiser and vacation
From other worldly occupation)
To reden in this book of wikked wives.
He knew of hem mo legendes and mo lives,
Than ben of goode wives in the Bible.

For trusteth wel, it is an impossible, 6270
That any clerk wol speken good of wives,
(But if it be of holy seintes lives)

Ne

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 249

Ne of non other woman never the mo.
 Who peinted the leon, telleth me, who?
 By God, if wimmen hadden written stories,
 As clerkes han, within hir oratories,
 They wold have writ of men more wikkednesse,
 Than all the merke of Adam may redresse.
 The children of Mercury and of Venus
 Ben in hir werking ful contrarious. 6280
 Mercury loveth wisdom and science,
 And Venus loveth riot and dispence.
 And for hir divers disposition,
 Eche falleth in others exaltation.
 As thus, God wote, Mercury is desolat
 In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltat,
 And Venus falleth wher Mercury is reised.
 Therefore no woman of no clerk is preised.
 The clerk whan he is old, and may nought do
 Of Venus werkes not worth his old sho, 6290
 Than siteth he doun, and writeth in his dotage,
 That wimmen cannot kepe hir mariage.
 But now to purpos, why I tolde thee,
 That I was beten for a book parde.

Upon a night Jankin, that was our fire,
 Red on his book, as he fate by the fire,
 Of Eva first, that for hire wikkednesse
 Was all mankind brought to wretchednesse,

For

250 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

For which that Jesu Crist himself was slain,
That bought us with his herte blood again. 6300

Lo here expresse of wimmen may ye find,
That woman was the losse of all mankind.

Tho redde he me how Sampson lost his heres
Sleping, his lemman kitte hem with hire sheres,
Thurgh whiche trefon lost he both his eyen.

Tho redde he me, if that I shal not lien,
Of Hercules, and of his Deianire,
That caused him to set himself a-fire.

Nothing forgot he the care and the wo,
That Socrates had with his wives two; 6310
How Xantippa cast pisse upon his hed.

This sely man sat still, as he were ded,
He wiped his hed, no more dorst he sain,
But, er the thonder stint ther cometh rain.

Of Pasiphae, that was the quene of Crete,
For shrewednesse him thought the tale swete.
Fie, speke no more (it is a grisely thing)
Of hire horrible lust and hire liking.

Of Clitemnestra for hire lecherie
That falsely made hire husbond for to die, 6320
He redde it with ful good devotion.

He told me eke, for what occasion
Amphiorax at Thebes lost his lif:
My husbond had a legend of his wif

Eriphile,

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 251

Eriphile, that for an ouche of gold
Hath prively unto the Grekes told,
Wher that hire husbond hidde him in a place,
For which he had at Thebes fory grace.

Of Lima told he me, and of Lucie :
They bothe made hir husbondes for to die, 6330
That on for love, that other was for hate.
Lima hire husbond on an even late
Enpoysoned hath, for that she was his fo :
Lucia likerous loved hire husbond fo,
That for he shuld alway upon hire thinke,
She yave him swiche a maner love-drinke,
That he was ded er it were by the morwe :
And thus algates husbondes hadden sorwe.

Than told he me, how on Latumeus
Complained to his felaw Arius, 6340
That in his gardin growed swiche a tree,
On which he said how that his wives three
Honged hemself for hertes despitous.
O leve brother, quod this Arius,
Yeve me a plant of thilke blessed tree,
And in my gardin planted shal it be.

Of later date of wives hath he redde,
That som han slain hir husbonds in hir bedde,
And let hir lechour dight hem all the night,
While that the corps lay in the flore upright: 6350
And

252 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

And som han driven nailes in hir brain,
While that they slepe, and thus they han hem slain :
Som han hem yeven poyson in hir drink :
He spake more harm than herte may bethinke.

And therewithall he knew of mo proverbes,
Than in this world ther growen gras or herbes.

Bet is (quod he) thin habitation
Be with a leon, or a foule dragon,
Than with a woman using for to chide.

Bet is (quod he) high in the roof abide, 6360
Than with an angry woman down in the hous,
They ben so wikked and contrarious :
They haten, that hir hufbonds loven ay.

He sayd, a woman cast hire shame away,
Whan she cast of hire finock ; and forther mo,
A faire woman, but she be chafte also,
Is like a gold ring in a fowes nose.

Who coude wene, or who coude suppose
The wo that in min herte was, and the pine ?
And whan I saw he n'olde never fine, 6370
To reden on this cursed book all night,
Al sodenly three leves have I plight
Out of his book, right as he redde, and eke
I with my fist so toke him on the cheke,
That in oure fire he fell bakward adoun.
And he up sterte, as doth a wood leoun,

And

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE. 253

And with his fist he smote me on the hed,
 That in the flore I lay as I were ded.
 And whan he saw how stille that I lay,
 He was agast, and wold have fled away, 6380
 Til at the last out of my swough I brayde.
 O, hast thou slain me, false thee? I sayde,
 And for my lond thus hast thou mordred me?
 Er I be ded, yet wol I kissen thee.

And nere he came, and kneled faire adoun,
 And sayde; dere suster Alisoun,
 As helpe me God I shal thee never finite:
 That I have don it is thyself to wite,
 Foryeve it me, and that I thee beseke.
 And yet eftsones I hitte him on the cheke, 6390
 And sayde; thee, thus much am I awreke.
 Now wol I die, I may no longer speke.

But at the last, with mochel care and wo
 We fell accorded by ourselven two:
 He yaf me all the bridel in min. hond
 To han the governance of hous and lond,
 And of his tonge, and of his hond also,
 And made him brenne his book anon right tho.

And whan that I had gotten unto me
 By maistrie all the foverainetee, 6400
 And that he sayd, min owen trewe wif,
 Do as thee list, the terme of all thy lif,

Kepe

254 THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

Kepe thin honour, and kepe eke min estat ;
 After that day we never had debat.
 God helpe me so, I was to him as kinde,
 As any wif fro Denmark unto Inde,
 And al so trewe, and so was he to me :
 I pray to God that fit in majestee
 So blisse his foule, for his mercy dere.
 Now wol I say my tale if ye wol here. 6410

The frere lough whan he had herd all this :
 Now dame, quod he, so have I joye and blis,
 This is a long preamble of a tale.

And whan the Sompnour herd the frere gale,
 Lo (quod this Sompnour) Goddes armes two,
 A frere wol entermete him evermo :
 Lo, goode men, a flie and eke a frere
 Wol fall in every dish and eke matere.
 What spekest thou of preambulatioun ?
 What ? amble or trot ; or pees, or go fit down : 6420
 Thou lettest our disport in this matere. [frere ;

Ye, wolt thou so, Sire Sompnour ? quod the
 Now by my faith I shal, er that I go,
 Tell of a Sompnour swiche a tale or two,
 That all the folk shal laughen in this place.

Now elles, frere, I wol beshrewe thy face,
 (Quod this Sompnour) and I beshrewe me,
 But if I telle tales two or three

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE. 255

Of freres, or I come to Sidenborne,
That I shal make thin herte for to morne : 6430
For wel I wot thy patience is gone.

Our hoste cried, pees, and that anon ;
And sayde ; let the woman tell hire tale.
Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale.
Do, dame, tell forth your tale, and that is best.

Al redy, fire, quod she, right as you lest,
If I have licence of this worthy frere.
Yes, dame, quod he, tell forth, and I wol here.

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE.

In olde dayes of the king Artour,
Of which that Bretons speken gret honour, 6440
All was this lond fulfilled of faerie ;
The Elf quene, with hire joly compaignie
Danced ful oft in many a grene mede.
This was the old opinion as I rede ;
I speke of many hundred yeres ago ;
But now can no man see non elves mo,
For now the grete charitee and prayeres
Of limitoures and other holy freres,
That serchen every land and every streme,
As thikke as motes in the sonne beme, 6450
Blissing halles, chambres, kichenes, and boures,
Citees and burghes, castles highe and toures,

Thropes

256 THE WIFE OF BATHES TALE.

Thropes and bernes, shepenes and dairies,
 This maketh that ther ben no faeries :
 For ther as wont to walken was an elf,
 Ther walketh now the limitour himself,
 In undermeles and in morweninges,
 And sayth his Matines and his holy thinges,
 As he goth in his limitatioun.

Women may now go safely up and down, 6460
 In every bush, and under every tree,
 Ther is non other incubus but he,
 And he ne will don hem no dishonour.

Aud so befell it, that this king Artour
 Had in his hous a lusty bachelor,
 That on a day came riding fro river :
 And happed, that, alone as she was borne,
 He saw a maiden walking him beforene,
 Of which maid he anon, maugre hire hed,
 By veray force beraft hire maidenhed : 6470
 For which oppression was swiche clamour,
 And swiche pursuite unto the king Artour,
 That damned was this knight for to be ded
 By cours of lawe, and shuld have lost his hed,
 (Paraventure swiche was the statute tho)
 But that the quene and other ladies mo
 So longe praieden the king of grace,
 Til he his lif him granted in the place,

And

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE. 257

And yaf him to the quene, all at hire will
To chese whether ſhe wold him ſave or ſpill. 6480

The quene thanketh the king with al hire might ;
And after this thus ſpake ſhe to the knight,
Whan that ſhe ſaw hire time upon a day.

Thou ſtandeſt yet (quod ſhe) in ſwiche array,
That of thy liſ yet haſt thou no ſeuretee ;

I grant thee liſ, if thou canſt tellen me,
What thing is it that women moſt deſiren :

Beware, and kepe thy nekke bone from yren.

And if thou canſt not tell it me anon,

Yet wol I yeve thee leve for to gon 6490

A twelvemonth and a day, to ſeke and lere

An anſwer ſuffiſant in this matere.

And ſeuretee wol I have, or that thou pace,

Thy body for to yelden in this place.

Wo was the knight, and ſorwefully he ſiketh ;

But what ? he may not don all as him liketh.

And at the laſt he chese him for to wende,

And come agen right at the yeres ende

With ſwiche anſwer, as God wold him purvay :

And taketh his leve, and wendeth forth his way. 6500

He ſeketh every hous and every place,

Wher as he hopeth for to finden grace,

To lernen what thing women loven moſte :

But he ne coude ariven in no coſte,

258 THE WIF OF BATHES TALE.

Wher as he mighte find in this matere
Two creatures according in fere.

Som saiden, women loven best richeffe,
Som saiden honour, som saiden jolineffe,
Som riche array, som saiden lust a-bedde,
And oft time to be widewe and to be wedde. 6510

Some saiden, that we ben in herte most esed
Whan that we ben yflatered and ypreisid.
He goth ful nigh the soth, I wol not lie;
A man shal winne us best with flaterie;
And with attendance, and with besinesse
Ben we ylimed bothe more and lesse.

And som men saiden, that we loven best
For to be free, and do right as us lest,
And that no man repreve us of our vice,
But say that we ben wise, and nothing nice. 6520
For trewely ther n'is non of us all,
If any wight wol claw us on the gall,
That we n'ill kike, for that he saith us soth:
Assay, and he shal find it, that so doth.
For be we never so vicious withinne,
We wol be holden wise and clene of sinne.

And som saiden, that gret delit han we
For to be holden stable and eke secre,
And in o purpos stedfastly to dwell,
And not bewreyen thing that men us tell. 6530

But

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE. 259

But that tale is not worth a rake-stele.

Parde we women connen nothing hele,

Witnesse on Mida; wol ye here the tale?

Ovide, amonges other thinges finale,

Said, Mida had under his longe heres

Growing upon his hed two asses eres;

The whiché vice he hid, as he besté might,

Ful subtilly from every mannes sight,

That, save his wif, ther wist of it no mo;

He loved hire most, and trusted hire also; 6540

He praied hire, that to no créature

She n'olde tellen of his disfigure.

She swore him, nay, for all the world to winne,

She nolde do that vilanie, ne finne,

To make hire husbond han so foule a name;

She n'olde not tell it for hire owen shame.

But natheles hire thoughte that she dide,

That she so longe shuld a conseil hide;

Hire thought it swal so sore aboute hire herte,

That nedely som word hire must avertere; 6550

And sith she dorst nat telle it to no man,

Doun to a mareis faste by she ran,

Til she came ther, hire herte was a-fire:

And as a bitore bumbleth in the mire,

She laid hire mouth unto the water doun.

Bewrey me not, thou water, with thy foun,

260 THE WIF OF BATHES TALE.

Quod she, to thee I tell it, and no mo,
 Min husbond hath long asses eres two.
 Now is min herte all hole, now is it out,
 I might no lenger kepe it out of dout. 6560
 Here may ye see, though we a time abide,
 Yet out it moſte, we can no conſeil hide.
 The remenant of the tale, if ye wol here,
 Redeth Ovide, and ther ye may it lere.

This knight, of which my tale is ſpecially,
 Whan that he ſaw he might not come therby,
 (This is to ſayn, what women loven moſt)
 Within his breſt ful ſorweful was his goſt.
 But home he goth, he mighte not ſojourne,
 The day was come, that homward muſt he turne.
 And in his way, it happed him to ride 6571
 In all his care, under a foreſt ſide,
 Wheras he ſaw upon a dance go
 Of ladies foure and twenty, and yet mo.
 Toward this ilke dance he drow ful yerne,
 In hope that he ſom wiſdom ſhulde lerne;
 But certainly, er he came fully there,
 Yvanished was this dance, he n'iſte not wher;
 No creature ſaw he that bare liſ,
 Save on the grene he ſaw fitting a wiſ, 6580
 A fouler wight ther may no man deviſe.
 Againe this knight this olde wiſ gan ariſe,

And

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE. 261

And said ; fire knight, here forth ne lith no way.

Tell me what that ye feken by your fay,

Paraventure it may the better be :

Thise olde folk con mochel thing, quod she.

My leve mother, quod this knight, certain,

I n'am but ded, but if that I can fain,

What thing it is that women most desire :

Coude ye me wisse, I wold quite wel your hire. 6590

Plight me thy trouthe here in myn hond, quod she,

The nexte thing that I requere of thee

Thou shalt it do, if it be in thy might,

And I wol tell it you or it be night.

Have here my trouthe, quod the knight, I graunte,

Thanne, quod she, I dare me wel avaunte,

Thy lif is sauf, for I wol stond therby,

Upon my lif the quene wol fay as I :

Let see, which is the proudest of hem alle,

That wereth on a kerchef or a calle, 6600

That dare sayn nay of that I shal you teche.

Let us go forth withouten lenger speche.

Tho rowned she a pistel in his ere,

And bad him to be glad, and have no fere.

Whan they ben comen to the court, this knight

Said, he had hold his day, as he had hight,

And redy was his answere, as he saide.

Ful many a noble wif, and many a maide,

262 THE WIF OF BATHES TALE.

And many a widewe, for that they ben wise,
(The quene hireself sitting as a justice) 6610

Assembled ben, his answer for to here,
And afterward this knight was bode appere,

To every wight commanded was silence,
And that the knight shuld tell in audience,
What thing that worldly women loven best.
This knight he stood not still, as doth a best,
But to this question anon answerd
With manly vois, that all the court it herd.

My liege lady, generally, quod he,
Women desiren to han foverainetee, 6620

As well over hir husbond as hir love,
And for to ben in maistrie him above.

This is your most desire, though ye me kille,
Doth as you list, I am here at your wille.

In all the court ne was ther wif ne maide,
Ne widewe, that contraried that he saide,
But said, he was worthy to han his lif.

And with that word up stert this olde wif,
Which that the knight saw sitting on the grene.
Mercy, quod she, my foveraine lady quene, 6630
Er that your court depart, as doth me right.
I taughte this answer unto this knight,
For which he plighte me his trouthe there,
The firste thing I wold of him requere,

He

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE. 263

He wold it do, if it lay in his might.
Before this court than pray I thee, fire knight,
Quod she, that thou me take unto thy wif,
For wel thou wost, that I have kept thy lif :
If I say false, say nay upon thy fay.

This knight answered, alas and wala wa ! 6640
I wot right wel that swiche was my behest.
For Goddes love as chese a new request :
Take all my good, and let my body go.

Nay than, quod she, I shrewe us bothe two,
For though that I be olde, foule, and pore,
I n'olde for all the metal ne the ore,
That under erthe is grave, or lith above,
But if thy wif I were and eke thy love.

My love ? quod he, nay, my dampnation.
Alas ! that any of my nation 6650
Shuld ever so foule disparaged be.
But all for nought ; the end is this, that he
Constrained was, he nedes must hire wed,
And taketh this olde wif, and goth to bed.

Now wolden som men fayn paraventure,
That for my negligence I do no cure
To tellen you the joye and all the array,
That at the feste was that ilke day.

To which thing shortly answeren I shal :
I say ther was no joye ne feste at al, 6660

264 THE WIE OF BATHES TALE.

Ther n'as but hevinessse and mochel sorwe :
For prively he wedded hire on the morwe,
And all day after hid him as an oule,
So wo was him, his wif loked so foule.

Gret was the wo the knight had in his thought
Whan he was with his wif a-bed ybrought,
He walweth, and he turneth to and fro.

This olde wif lay siniling evermo,
And said : O dere husbond, *benedicite*,
Fareth every knight thus with his wif as ye ? 6670
Is this the lawe of king Artoures hous ?
Is every knight of his thus dangerous ?
I am your owen love, and eke your wif,
I am she, which that saved hath your lif,
And certes yet did I you never unright.
Why fare ye thus with me this firste night ?
Ye faren like a man had lost his wit.
What is my gilt ? for Goddes love tell it,
And it shal ben amended, if I may.

Amended ? quod this knight, alas ! nay, nay, 6680
It wol not ben amended never mo ;
Thou art so lothly, and so olde also,
And therto comen of so low a kind,
That litel wonder is though I walwe and wind ;
So wolde God, min herte wolde brest.

Is this, quod she, the cause of your unrest ?

Ye

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE. 265

Ye certainly, quod he, no wonder is,
Now sire, quod she, I coude amend all this,
If that me list, er it were dayes three,
So wel ye mighten bere you unto me. 6690

But for ye speken of swiche gentilleffe,
As is descended out of old richeffe,
That therfore shullen ye be gentilmen;
Swiche arrogance n'is not worth an hen.

Loke who that is most vertuous alway,
Prive and apert, and most entendeth ay
To do the gentil dedes that he can,
And take him for the gretest gentilman.
Crist wol we claime of him our gentilleffe,
Not of our elders for hir old richeffe. 6700

For though they yeve us all hir heritage,
For which we claime to ben of high parage,
Yet may they not bequethen, for no thing,
To non of us, hir vertuous living,
That made hem gentilmen called to be,
And bade us folwen hem in swiche degree.

Wel can the wise poet of Florence,
That highte Dant, speken of this sentence :
Lo, in swiche maner rime is Dantes tale.

Ful felde up riseth by his branches finale 6710
Prowesse of man, for God of his goodnesse
Wol that we claime of him our gentilleffe :

For

266 THE WIF OF BATHES TALE.

For of our elders may we nothing claime
But temporel thing, that man may hurt and maime.

Eke every wight wot this as wel as I,
If gentilleſſe were planted naturelly
Unto a certain lineage down the line,
Prive and apert, than wold they never fine
To don of gentilleſſe the faire office,
They mighten do no vilanie or vice. 6720

Take fire and bere it into the derkeſt hous
Betwix this and the mount of Caucasus,
And let men ſhette the dores, and go thenne,
Yet wol the fire as faire lie and brenne
As twenty thouſand men might it behold;
His office naturel ay wol it hold,
Up peril of my lif, til that it die.

Here may ye ſee wel, how that genterie
Is not annexed to poſſeſſion,
Sith folk ne don hir operation 6730
Alway, as doth the fire, lo, in his kind.
For God it wot, men moun ful often find
A lordes ſone do ſhame and vilanie.
And he that wol han pris of his genterie,
For he was boren of a gentil hous,
And had his elders noble and vertuous,
And n'ill himſelven do no gentil dedes,
Ne folwe his gentil aunceſtrie, that ded is,

He

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE. 267

He n'is not gentil, be he duk or erl;
For vilains sinful dedes make a cherl. 6740
For gentilleſſe n'is but the renomee
Of thin auncestres, for hir high bountee,
Which is a strange thing to thy persone:
Thy gentilleſſe cometh fro God alone.
Than cometh our veray gentilleſſe of grace,
It was no thing bequethed us with our place.

Thinketh how noble, as faith Valerius,
Was thilke Tullius Hostilius,
That out of poverte rose to high nobleſſe.
Redeth Senek, and redeth eke Boece, 6750
Ther shull ye seen expresse, that it no dred is,
That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis.
And therfore, leve hufbond, I thus conclude,
Al be it that min auncestres weren rude,
Yet may the highe God, and so hope I,
Granten me grace to liven vertuouſly:
Than am I gentil, whan that I beginne
To liven vertuouſly, and weiven finne.

And ther as ye of poverte me repreve,
The highe God, on whom that we beleve, 6760
In wilful poverte cheſe to lede his lif:
And certes, every man, maiden, or wif
May underſtond, that Jefus heven king
Ne wold not cheſe a vicious living.

Glad

268 THE WIF OF BATHES TALE.

Glad poverte is an honest thing certain,
 This wol Senek and other clerkes fain.
 Who so that halt him paid of his poverte,
 I hold him rich, al had he not a sherte,
 He that coveiteth is a poure wight,
 For he wold han that is not in his might; 6770
 But he that nought hath, ne coveiteth to have,
 Is riche, although ye hold him but a knave,
 Veray poverte is finne proprely.

Juvenal saith of poverte merily :
 The poure man whan he goth by the way,
 Beforn the theves he may sing and play.
 Poverte is hateful good ; and, as I gesse,
 A ful gret bringer out of befinesse ;
 A gret amender eke of sapience
 To him, that taketh it in patience, 6780
 Poverte is this, although it seme elenge,
 Possession that no wight wol challenge.
 Poverte ful often, whan a man is low,
 Maketh his God and eke himself to know :
 Poverte a spectakel is, as thinketh me,
 Thurgh which he may his veray frendes see.
 And therfore, sire, fin that I you not greve,
 Of my poverte no more me repreve,

Now, sire, of elde, that ye repreven me :
 And certes, sire, though non auctoritee 6790
 Were

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE. 269

Were in no book, ye gentiles of honour
Sain, that men shuld an oldè wight honour,
And clepe him fader, for your gentilleffe;
And auctours shal I finden, as I gesse.

Now ther ye sain that I am foule and old,
Than drede ye not to ben a cokewold.
For filthe, and elde also, so mote I the,
Ben grete wardeins upon chastitee.
But natheles, sin I know your delit,
I shal fulfill your worldly appetit. 6800

Chese now (quod she) on of thise thinges twey,
To han me foule and old til that I dey,
And be to you a trewe humble wif,
And never you displese in all my lif:
Or elles wol ye han me yonge and faire,
And take your aventure of the repaire,
That shal be to your hous because of me,
Or in som other place it may wel be?
Now chese yourselven whether that you liketh.

This knight aviseth him, and fore siketh, 6810
But at the last he said in this manere;

My lady and my love, and wif so dere,
I put me in your wise governaunce,
Cheseth yourself which may be most plesance
And most honour to you and me also,
I do no force the whether of the two:

For

270 THE WIF OF BATHES TALE.

For as you liketh, it sufficeth me.

Than have I got the maisterie, quod she,
Sin I may chese and governe as me lest.

Ye certes, wif, quod he, I hold it best. 6820

Kisse me, quod she, we be no lenger wrothe,
For by my trouth I wol be to you bothe,
This is to sayn, ye bothe faire and good.
I pray to God that I mote sterven wood,
But I to you be al so good and trewe,
As ever was wif, sin that the world was newe ;
And but I be to-morwe as faire to seen,
As any lady, emperice, or queene,
That is betwix the Est and eke the West,
Doth with my lif and deth right as you lest. 6830
Cast up the curtein, loke how that it is.

And whan the knight saw veraily all this,
That she so faire was, and so yonge therto,
For joye he hent hire in his armes two :
His herte bathed in a bath of blisse,
A thousand time a-row he gan hire kisse :
And she obeyed him in every thing,
That mighte don him plesance or liking.
And thus they live unto hir lives ende
In parfit joye, and Jesu Crist us sende 6840
Husbondes meke and yonge, and fresh a-bed,
And grace to overlive hem that we wed.

And

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE. 271

And eke I pray Jesus to short hir lives,
That wol not be governed by hir wives.
And old and angry nigards of dispence,
God send hem sone a veray pestilence.

THE FRERES PROLOGUE.

THIS worthy limitour, this noble Frere,
He made alway a maner louring chere
Upon the Sompnour, but for honestee
No vilains word as yet to him spake he : 6850
But at the last he said unto the wif;
Dame, (quod he) God yeve you right good lif,
Ye have here touched, all so mote I the,
In scole matere a ful gret difficultee.
Ye han said mochel thing right wel, I say :
But, dame, here as we riden by the way,
Us nedeth not to speken but of game,
And let auctoritees in Goddes name
To preching, and to scole eke of clergie.

But if it like unto this compaignie, 6860
I wol you of a Sompnour tell a game ;
Parde ye may wel knowen by the name,
That of a Sompnour may no good be said ;
I pray that non of you be evil apaid :
A Sompnour is a renner up and down
With mandements for fornicatioun,

And

272 THE FRERES PROLOGUE.

And is ybete at every tounes ende.

Tho spake our hoste ; A, fire, ye shuld ben hende
And curteis, as a man of your estat,

In compaignie we wiln have no debat : 6870

Telleth your tale, and let the Sompnour be.

Nay, quod the Sompnour, let him say by me

What so him list ; whan it cometh to my lot,

By God I shal him quiten every grot.

I shal him tellen which a gret honour

It is to be a flatering limitour,

And eke of many another maner crime,

Which nedeth not reherfen at this time,

And his office I shal him tell ywis.

Our hoste answered ; pees, no more of this. 6880

And afterward he said unto the Frere,

Tell forth your tale, min owen maister dere.

THE FRERES TALE.

WHILOM ther was dwelling in my contree

An archedeken, a man of high degree,

That boldely did execution

In punishing of fornication,

Of witchecraft, and eke of bauderie,

Of defamation, and avouterie,

Of chirche-reves, and of testaments,

Of contracts, and of lack of sacraments, 6890

Of

Of usure, and of simonie also;
 But certes lechours did he gretest wo,
 They shulden singen, if that they were hent;
 And finale titheres weren foule yshent;
 If any persone wold upon hem plaine,
 Ther might astert hem no pecunial peine,
 For finale tithes, and finale offering,
 He made the peple pitously to sing;
 For er the bishop hent hem with his crook
 They weren in the archedekens book; 6900
 Than had he thurgh his jurisdiction
 Power to don on hem correction.

He had a Sompnour redy to his hond,
 A slier boy was non in Englelond;
 For subtilly he had his espiaille,
 That taught him wel wher it might ought availle.
 He coude spare of lechours on or two,
 To techen him to foure and twenty mo.
 For though this Sompnour wood be as an hare,
 To tell his harlotrie I wol not spare; 6910
 For we ben out of hir correction,
 They han of us no jurisdiction,
 Ne never shul have, terme of all hir lives.

Peter, so ben the women of the stives,
 Quod this Sompnour, yput out of our cure.
 Pees, with mischance and with misaventure,

Our hoste said, and let him tell his tale.
 Now telleth forth, and let the Sompnour gale,
 Ne spareth not, min owen maister dere.

This false theef, this Sompnour, quod the frere,
 Had alway baudes redy to his hond, 6921
 As any hauke to lure in Englelond,
 That told him all the secree that they knewe,
 For hir acquaintance was not come of newe;
 They weren his approvers prively.

He tooke himself a gret profit therby,
 His maister knew not alway what he wan.
 Withouten mandement, a lewed man
 He coude sompne, up peine of Cristes curse,
 And they were inly glad to fille his purse, 6930
 And maken him gret festes at the nale.
 And right as Judas hadde purfes smale
 And was a theef, right swiche a theef was he,
 His master hadde but half his dуетee.

He was (if I shal yeven him his laud)
 A theef, and eke a Sompnour, and a baud.

He had eke wenches at his retenue,
 That whether that fire Robert or fire Hue,
 Or Jakke, or Rauf, or who so that it were
 That lay by hem, they told it in his ere. 6940
 Thus was the wenche and he of on assent.
 And he wold secche a feined mandement,

And

And sompne hem to the chapitre bothe two,
And pill the man, and let the wenche go.
Than wold he say; frend, I shal for thy sake
Do strike thee out of oure lettres blake;
Thee thar no more as in this cas travaille;
I am thy frend ther I may thee availle.
Certain he knew of briboures many mo,
Than possible is to tell in yeres two: 6950
For in this world n'is dogge for the bowe,
That can an hurt dere from an hole yknowe,
Bet than this Sompnour knew a flie lechour,
Or an avoutrer, or a paramour:
And for that was the fruit of all his rent,
Therefore on it he set all his entent.

And so befell, that ones on a day
This Sompnour, waiting ever on his pray,
Rode forth to sompne a widewe, an olde ribibe,
Feining a cause, for he wold han a bribe. 6960
And happed that he saw befor him ride
A gay yeman under a forest fide:
A bow he bare, and arwes bright and kene,
He had upon a courtepy of grene,
An hat upon his hed with frenges blake:

Sire, quod this Sompnour, haile and wel atake.

Welcome, quod he, and every good felaw;
Whider ridest thou under this grene shaw?

(Saide this yeman) wolt thou fer to-day ?

This Sompnour him answerd, and saide, nay. 6970
 Here faste by (quod he) is min entent
 To riden, for to reisen up a rent,
 That longeth to my lordes duetee.

A, art thou than a baillif ? Ye, quod he.
 (He dorste not for veray filth and shame
 Say that he was a Sompnour, for the name).

De par dieux, quod this yeman, leve brother,
 Thou art a baillif, and I am another.
 I am unknowen, as in this contree.

Of thin acquaintance I wol prayen thee, 6980
 And eke of brotherhed, if that thee list.
 I have gold and silver lying in my chift ;
 If that thee hap to come in to our shire,
 Al shal be thin, right as thou wolt desire.

Grand mercy, quod this Sompnour, by my faith.
 Everich in others hond his trouthe laith,
 For to be sworne brethren til they dey.
 In daliaunce they riden forth and pley.

This Sompnour, which that was as ful of jangles,
 As ful of venime ben thise wariangles, 6990
 And ever enquering upon every thing,
 Brother, quod he, wher is now your dwelling,
 Another day if that I shuld you secche ?

This yeman him answerd in softe speche ;

Brother,

Brother, quod he, fer in the North contree,
 Wheras I hope somtime I shal thee see,
 Or we depart I shal thee so wel wisse,
 That of min hous ne shalt thou never misse.

Now brother, quod this Sompnour, I you pray,
 Teche me, while that we riden by the way, 7000
 (Sith that ye ben a baillif as am I)
 Som subtiltee, and tell me faithfully
 In min office how I may moste winne.
 And spareth not for conscience or for sinne,
 But, as my brother, tell me how do ye.

Now by my trouthe, brother min, said he,
 As I shal tellen thee a faithful tale.
 My wages ben ful streit and eke ful smale;
 My lord is hard to me and dangerous,
 And min office is ful laborious; 7010
 And therfore by extortion I leve,
 Forsoth I take all that men wol me yeve.
 Algates by sleighte or by violence
 Fro yere to yere I win all my dispence;
 I can no better tellen faithfully.

Now certes, (quod this Sompnour) so fare I;
 I spare not to taken, God it wote,
 But if it be to hevy or to hote.
 What I may gete in conseil prively,
 No maner conscience of that have I. 7020

N'ere min extortion, I might not liven,
 Ne of swiche japes wol I not be shriven,
 Stomak ne conscience know I non;
 I shrew thise shrifte faders everich on.
 Wel be we met by God and by Seint Jame.
 But leve brother, tell me than thy name,
 Quod this Sompnour. Right in this mene while
 This yeman gan a litel for to finile.

Brother, quod he, wolt thou that I thee tell?
 I am a fend, my dwelling is in hell, 7030
 And here I ride about my pourchasing,
 To wote wher men wol give me any thing.
 My pourchas is th'effect of all my rent.
 Loke how thou ridest for the same entent
 To winnen good, thou rekkest never how,
 Right so fare I, for riden wol I now
 Unto the worldes ende for a praye.

A, quod this Sompnour, *benedicite*, what say ye?
 I wend ye were a yeman trewely.
 Ye have a mannes shape as wel as I. 7040
 Have ye than a figure determinat
 In helle, ther ye ben in your estat?

Nay certainly, quod he, ther have we non,
 But whan us liketh we can take us on,
 Or elles make you wene that we ben shape
 Somtime like a man, or like an ape;

Or

Or like an angel can I ride or go ;
It is no wonder thing though it be so,
A lousy jogelour can deceiven thee,
And parde yet can I more craft than he. 7050

Why, quod the Sompnour, ride ye than or gon
In sondry shape, and not alway in on ?

For we, quod he, wol us swiche forme make,
As most is able our preye for to take.

What maketh you to han al this labour ?

Ful many a cause, leve fire Sompnour,
Saide this fend. But alle thing hath time ;
The day is short, and it is passed prime,
And yet ne wan I nothing in this day ;
I wol entend to winning, if I may, 7060

And not entend our thinges to declare :
For, brother min, thy wit is al to bare
To understand, although I told hem thee.

But for thou axest, why labouren we :
For somtime we be Goddes instruments,
And menes to don his commandements,
Whan that him list, upon his creatures,
In divers actes and in divers figures :
Withouten him we have no might certain,
If that him list to stonden theragain. 7070

And som time at our praiere han we leve,
Only the body, and not the soule to greve :

Witnesse on Job, whom that we didnen wo,
 And somtime han we might on bothe two,
 This is to fain, on soule and body eke.
 And somtime be we suffered for to seke
 Upon a man, and don his soule unreste
 And not his body, and all is for the beste.
 Whan he withstandeth our temptation,
 It is a cause of his salvation, 7080
 Al be it that it was not our entente
 He shuld be sauf, but that we wold him hente.
 And somtime be we servants unto man,
 As to the archebishop Seint Dunstan,
 And to the apostle servant eke was I.

Yet tell me, quod this Sompnour, faithfully,
 Make ye you newe bodies thus alway
 Of elements? the fend answered, nay :
 Sometime we feine, and somtime we arise
 With ded bodies, in ful sondry wise, 7090
 And speke as renably, and faire, and wel,
 As to the Phitoneffe did Samuel :
 And yet wol som men say it was not he.
 I do no force of your divinitee.
 But o thing warne I thee, I wol not jape,
 Thou wolt algates wete how we be shape :
 Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother dere,
 Come, wher thee nedeth not of me to lere,

For

For thou shalt by thin owen experience
 Conne in a chaire rede of this sentence, 7100
 Bet than Virgile, while he was on live,
 Or Dant also. Now let us riden blive,
 For I wol holden compaignie with thee,
 Til it be so that thou forsake me.

Nay, quod this Sompnour, that shal never betide.
 I am a yeman knowen is ful wide;
 My trouthe wol I hold, as in this cas.
 For though thou were the devil Sathanas,
 My trouthe wol I hold to thee, my brother,
 As I have sworne, and eche of us to other, 7110
 For to be trewe brethren in this cas,
 And bothe we gon abouten our pourchas.
 Take thou thy part, what that men wol thee yeve,
 And I shal min, thus may we bothe leve.
 And if that any of us have more than other,
 Let him be trewe, and part it with his brother.

I graunte, quod the devil, by my fay.
 And with that word they riden forth hir way,
 And right at entring of the tounes ende,
 To which this Sompnour shope him for to wende,
 They saw a cart, that charged was with hay, 7121
 Which that a carter drove forth on his way.
 Depe was the way, for which the carte stood:
 The carter smote, and cried as he were wood,

Heit

Heit scot, heit brok, what spare ye for the stones ?
 The fend (quod he) you fecche body and bones,
 As ferforthly as ever ye were soled,
 So mochel wo as I have with you tholed.
 The devil have al, bothe hors, and cart, and hay.

The Sompnour sayde, here shal we have a pray ;
 And nere the fend he drow, as nought ne were, 7131
 Ful prively, and rouned in his ere :
 Herken my brother, herken, by thy faith,
 Hereft thou not, how that the carter faith ?
 Hent it anon, for he hath yeve it thee,
 Both hay and cart, and eke his caples three.

Nay, quod the devil, God wot, never a del,
 It is not his entente, trust thou me wel,
 Axe him thyself, if thou not trowest me,
 Or elles stint a while and thou shalt see. 7140

This carter thakketh his hors upon the croupe,
 And they begonne to drawen and to stoupe.
 Heit now, quod he, ther Jesu Crist you bleffe,
 And all his hondes werk, bothe more and lesse :
 That was wel twight, min owen liard boy,
 I pray God save thy body and Seint Eloy.
 Now is my cart out of the slough-parde.

Lo, brother, quod the fend, what told I thee ?
 Here may ye seen, min owen dere brother,
 The cherl spake o thing, but he thought another.

Let

Let us go forth abouten our viage;
Here win I nothing upon this cariage.

Whan that they comen fomewhat out of toun,
This Sompnour to his brother gan to roun;
Brother, quod he, here woneth an old rebekke,
That had almost as lese to lese hire nekke,
As for to yeve a peny of hire good.
I wol have twelf pens though that she be wood,
Or I wol somone hire to our office;
And yet, God wot, of hire know I no vice. 7160
But for thou canst not, as in this contree,
Winnen thy cost, take here ensample of me.

This Sompnour clappeth at the widewes gate;
Come out, he sayd, thou olde very trate;
I trow thou hast som frere or preeft with thee.

Who clappeth? said this wif, *benedicite*,
God save you, fire, what is your swete will?

I have, quod he, of somons here a bill.
Up peine of cursing, loke that thou be
To-morwe before the archedekenes knee, 7170
To answere to the court, of certain thinges.

Now lord, quod she, Crist Jesu, king of kinges,
So wisly helpe me, as I ne may.

I have ben fike, and that ful many a day.
I may not go so fer (quod she) ne ride,
But I be ded, so priketh it in my side.

May

May I not axe a libel, fire Sompnour,
 And answere ther by my procuratour
 To swiche thing as men wold apposen me?

Yes, quod this Sompnour, pay anon, let see, 7180
 Twelf pens to me, and I wol thee acquite.
 I shal no profit han therby but lite:
 My maister hath the profit and not I.
 Come of, and let me riden hastily;
 Yeve me twelf pens, I may no lenger tarie.

Twelf pens, quod she, now lady Seinte Marie
 So wisly helpe me out of care and finne,
 This wide world though that I shuld it winne,
 Ne have I not twelf pens within my hold.
 Ye knowen wel that I am poure and old; 7190
 Kithe your almesse upon me poure wretche.

Nay than, quod he, the foule fend me fetch,
 If I thee excuse, though thou shuldest be spilt.

Alas! quod she, God wot, I have no gilt.

Pay me, quod he, or by the swete Seinte Anne
 As I wol bere away thy newe panne
 For dette, which thou owest me of old,
 Whan that thou madeft thyn hufbond cokewold,
 I paid at home for thy correction.

Thou lieft, quod she, by my salvation, 7200
 Ne was I never or now, widew ne wif,
 Sompned unto your court in all my lif;

Ne

Ne never I n'as but of my body trewe.
Unto the devil rough and blake of hewe
Yeve I thy body and my panne also.

And whan the devil herd hire cursen so
Upon hire knees, he sayd in this manere ;

Now, Mabily, min owen moder dere,
Is this your will in ernest that ye sey ?

The devil, quod she, so fetch him or he dey, 7210
And panne and all, but he wol him repent.

Nay, olde stot, that is not min entent,
Quod this Sompnour, for to repenten me
For any thing that I have had of thee ;
I wold I had thy smok and every cloth.

Now brother, quod the devil, be not wroth ;
Thy body and this panne ben min by right.
Thou shalt with me to helle yet to-night,
Wher thou shalt knowen of our privetee
More than a maister of divinitee. 7220

And with that word the foule fend him hent.
Body and foule, he with the devil went,
Wher as this Sompnours han hir heritage ;
And God that maked after his image
Mankinde, save and gide us all and some,
And lene this Sompnour good man to become.

Lordings, I coude have told you (quod this frere)
Had I had leiser for this Sompnour here,

After

After the text of Crist, and Poule, and John,
 And of oure other doctours many on, 7230
 Swiche peines, that your hertes might agrise,
 Al be it so, that no tonge may devise,
 Though that I might a thousand winter tell,
 The peines of thilke cursed hous of hell.
 But for to kepe us fro that cursed place,
 Waketh, and prayeth Jesu of his grace,
 So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.
 Herkneeth this word, beware as in this cas.
 The leon sit in his awaite alway
 To sle the innocent, if that he may. 7240
 Disposeth ay your hertes to withstand
 The fend, that you wold maken thral and bond;
 He may not tempten you over your might,
 For Crist wol be your champion and your knight;
 And prayeth, that this Sompnour him repent
 Of his misdedes, or that the fend him hent.

THE SOMPNOURES PROLOGUE.

THIS Sompnour in his stirops high he stood,
 Upon this Frere his herte was so wood,
 That like an aspen leef he quoke for ire:
 Lordings, quod he, but o thing I desire, 7250
 I you beseeche, that of your curtesie,
 Sin ye han herd this false Frere lie,

As

THE SOMPNOURES PROLOGUE. 287

As suffereth me I may my tale telle.

This Frere bosteth that he knoweth helle,
And, God it wot, that is but litel wonder,
Freres and fendes ben but litel asonder.

For parde, ye han often time herd telle,
How that a Frere ravished was to helle
In spirit ones by a visioun,
And as an angel lad him up and doun, 7260
To shewen him the peines that ther were :
In all the place saw he not a Frere,
Of other folk he saw ynow in wo.

Unto this angel spake the Frere tho ;
Now, sire, quod he, han Freres swiche a grace,
That non of hem shal comen in this place ?

Yes, quod this angel, many a millioun :
And unto Sathanas he lad him doun.
(And now hath Sathanas, saith he, a tayl
Broder than of a carrike is the fayl) 7270
Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas, quod he,
Shew forth thin ers, and let the Frere see
Wher is the nest of Freres in this place.
And er than half a furlong way of space,
Right so as bees out swarmen of an hive,
Out of the devils ers ther gonnen drive
A twenty thousand Freres on a route,
And thurghout hell they swarmed al aboute,

And

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And com agen, as fast as they may gon,
And in his ers they crepen everich on : 7280
He clapt his tayl agen, and lay ful still.

This Frere, whan he loked had his fill
Upon the turments of this fory place,
His spirit God restored of his grace
Into his body agen, and he awoke ;
But natheles for fere yet he quoke,
So was the devils ers ay in his mind,
That is his heritage of veray kind.

God save you alle, save this cursed frere ;
My prologue wol I end in this manere. 7290

THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

LORDINGS, ther is in Yorkshire, as I gesse,
A mersh contree ycalled Holderneffe,
In which ther went a limitour aboute
To preche, and eke to beg, it is no doute.
And so befell that on a day this frere
Had preched at a chirche in his manere,
And specially aboven every thing
Excited he the peple in his preching
To trentals, and to yeve for Goddes sake,
Wherwith men mighten holy houses make, 7300
Ther as divine service is honoured,
Not ther as it is wasted and devoured,

Ne

Ne ther it nedeth not for to be yeven,
 As to possessioners, that mowen leven
 (Thanked be God) in wele and abundance.
 Trentals, sayd he, deliveren fro penance
 Hir frendes soules, as wel olde as yonge,
 Ye, whan that they ben hastily ysonge,
 Not for to hold a preest jolif and gay,
 He singeth not but o masse on a day. 7310
 Delivereth out (quod he) anon the soules.
 Ful hard it is, with fleshhook or with oules
 To ben yclawed, or to bren or bake :
 Now spede you hastily for Cristes sake.

And whan this frere had said all his entent,
 With *qui cum patre* forth his way he went.
 Whan folk in chirche had yeve him what hem left
 He went his way, no lenger wold he rest,
 With scrippe and tipped staf, ytucked hie :
 In every hous he gan to pore and prie, 7320
 And begged mele and chese, or elles corn.
 His felaw had a staf tipped with horn,
 A pair of tables all of ivory,
 And a pointel ypolished fetisly,
 And wrote alway the names, as he stood,
 Of alle folk that yave hem any good,
 Askaunce that he wolde for hem preye.
 Yeve us a bushel whete, or malt, or reye,

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A Goddes kichel, or a trippe of chese,
 Or elles what you list, we may not chese; 7330
 A Goddes halfpeny, or a masse peny;
 Or yeve us of your braun, if ye have any,
 A dagon of your blanket, leve dame,
 Our suster dere, (lo here I write your name)
 Bacon or beef, or swiche thing as ye find.

A sturdy harlot went hem ay behind,
 That was hir hostes man, and bare a fakke,
 And what men yave hem, laid it on his bakke.
 And whan that he was out at dore, anon
 He planed away the names everich on, 7340
 That he before had written in his tables:
 He served hem with nifles and with fables. [frere.

Nay, ther thou lieft, thou Sompnour, quod the
 Pees, quod our hoste, for Cristes moder dere,
 Tell forth thy tale, and spare it not at all.

So thrive I, quod this Sompnour, so I shall.

So long he went fro hous to hous, til he
 Came to an hous, ther he was wont to be
 Refreshed more than in a hundred places.
 Sike lay the hufbond man, whos that the place is,
 Bedred upon a couche low he lay: 7351

Deus hic, quod he, O Thomas frend, good day,
 Sayde this frere all curtisly and soft.

Thomas, quod he, God yelde it you, ful oft

Have

Have I upon this benche faren ful wele,
 Here have I eten many a mery mele.
 And fro the benche he drove away the cat,
 And laied adoun his potent and his hat,
 And eke his scrip, and set himself adoun :
 His felaw was ywalked into toun 7360
 Forth with his knave, into that hostelrye,
 Wher as he shope him thilke night to lie.

O dere maister, quod this fike man,
 How have ye faren sin that March began,
 I saw you not this fourtene night and more.

God wot, quod he, laboured have I ful fore,
 And specially for thy salvation
 Have I sayd many a precious orison,
 And for our other frendes, God hem bleffe.
 I have this day ben at your chirche at messe, 7370
 And said a sermon to my simple wit,
 Not all after the text of holy writ,
 For it is hard to you, as I suppose,
 And therefore wol I teche you ay the glose.
 Glosing is a ful glorious thing certain,
 For letter fleth, so as we clerkes sain.
 Ther have I taught hem to be charitable,
 And spend hir good ther it is resonable.
 And ther I saw our dame, a, wher is she?

Yonder I trow that in the yard she be, 7380

Sayde this man, and she wol come anon.

Ey maister, welcome be ye by Seint John,
Sayde this wif, how fare ye hertily ?

This frere ariseth up ful curtisly,
And hire embraceth in his armes narwe,
And kisseth hire swete, and chirketh as a sparwe
With his lippes : dame, quod he, right wel,
As he that is your servant every del.
Thanked be God, that you yaf soule and lif,
Yet saw I not this day so faire a wif 7390
In all the chirche, God so save me.

Ye, God amende defautes, fire, quod she,
Algates welcome be ye, by my fay.

Grand mercy, dame, that have I found alway.
But of your grete goodnesse, by your leve,
I wolde pray you that ye not you greve,
I wol with Thomas speke a litel throw :
Thise curates ben so negligent and slow
To gropen tendrely a conscience.
In shrift, in preching is my diligence 7400
And study, in Peters wordes and in Poules,
I walke and fishe Cristen mennes soules,
To yeld our Lord Jesu his propre rent ;
To sprede his word is sette all min entent.

Now by your faith, o dere fire, quod she,
Chideth him wel for Seinte Charitee.

He

He is ay angry as is a pissefire,
 Though that he have all that he can desire,
 Though I him wrie a-night, and make him warm,
 And over him lay my leg and eke min arm, 7410
 He groneth as our bore, lith in our stie :
 Other disport of him right non have I,
 I may not plesse him in no maner cas.

O Thomas, *jeo vous die*, Thomas, Thomas,
 This maketh the fend, this muste ben amended.
 Ire is a thing that high God hath defended,
 And therof wol I speke a word or two.

Now, maister, quod the wif, er that I go,
 What wol ye dine? I wol go therabout.

Now, dame, quod he, *jeo vous die sanz doute*, 7420
 Have I nat of a capon but the liver,
 And of your white bred nat but a shiver,
 And after that a rosted pigges hed,
 (But I ne wolde for me no beest were ded)
 Than had I with you homly suffisance.
 I am a man of litel sustenance.
 My spirit hath his fostering in the Bible.
 My body is ay so redy and so penible
 To waken, that my stomak is destroyed.
 I pray you, dame, that ye be nought annoied, 7430
 Though I so frendly you my conseil shewe ;
 By God I n'old have told it but a few,

Now, fire, quod she, but o word er I go,
My child is ded within thise wekes two,
Sone after that ye went out of this toun.

His deth saw I by revelatioun,
Sayde this frere, at home in our dortour.
I dare wel fain, that er than half an hour
After his deth, I saw him borne to blisse
In min avision, so God me wisse. 7440
So did our sextein, and our fermerere,
That han ben trewe freres fifty yere;
They may now, God be thanked of his lone,
Maken hir jubilee, and walke alone.
And up I arose, and all our covent eke,
With many a tere trilling on our cheke,
Withouten noise or clatering of belles,
Te deum was our song, and nothing elles,
Save that to Crist I bade an orison,
Thanking him of my revelation. 7450
For, fire and dame, trusteth me right wel,
Our orisons ben more effectuel,
And more we seen of Cristes secree thinges,
Than borel folk, although that they be kinges.
We live in poverte, and in abstinence,
And borel folk in richeffe and dispence
Of mete and drinke, and in hir foule delit.
We han this worldes lust all in despit.

Lazar

THE SOMPNOURES TALE. 295

Lazar and Dives liveden diversely,
 And divers guerdon hadden they therby. 7460
 Who so wol pray, he must fast and be clene,
 And fat his soule, and make his body lene.
 We fare, as sayth the apostle ; cloth and food
 Sufficeth us, though they be not ful good.
 The cleneneffe and the fasting of us freres,
 Maketh that Crist accepteth our praieres.

Lo, Moises forty daies and forty night
 Fasted, er that the high God ful of might
 Spake with him in the mountagne of Sinay :
 With empty wombe of fasting many a day, 7470
 Received he the lawe, that was writen
 With Goddes finger ; and Eli, wel ye witen,
 In mount Oreb, er he had any speche
 With highe God, that is our lives leche,
 He fasted long, and was in contemplance.

Aaron, that had the temple in governance,
 And eke the other preeftes everich on,
 Into the temple whan they shulden gon
 To praien for the peple, and do servise,
 They n'olden drinken in no maner wise 7480
 No drinke, which that might hem dronken make,
 But ther in abstinence pray and wake,
 Lest that they deiden : take heed what I say—
 But they be sobre that for the peple pray—

Ware that I say—no more : for it sufficeth.
 Our Lord Jesu, as holy writ deviseth,
 Yave us ensample of fasting and praieres :
 Therfore we mendiants, we sely freres,
 Ben wedded to poverte and continence,
 To charitee, humbleesse, and abstinence, 7490
 To persecution for rightwisnesse,
 To weping, misericorde, and to clenenesse.
 And therfore may ye see that our praieres
 (I speke of us, we mendiants, we freres)
 Ben to the highe God more acceptable
 Than youres, with your festes at your table.

Fro Paradis first, if I shal not lie,
 Was man out chafed for his glotonie,
 And chaste was man in Paradis certain.
 But herken now, Thomas, what I shal sayn, 7500
 I have no text of it, as I suppose,
 But I shal find it in a maner glose ;
 That specially our swete Lord Jesus
 Spake this by freres, whan he sayde thus,
 Blessed be they that poure in spirit ben.
 And so forth all the gospel may ye sen,
 Whether it be liker our profession,
 Or hers that swimmen in possession.
 Fie on hir pompe, and on hir glotonie,
 And on hir lewednesse : I hem desie.

7510
Me

Me thinketh they ben like Jovinian,
 Fat as a whale, and walken as a swan;
 Al vinolent as botel in the spence;
 Hir praier is of ful gret reverence;
 Whan they for soules say the Psalm of Davit,
 Lo, bus they say, *Cor meum eructavit.*

Who foloweth Cristes gospel and his lore
 But we, that humble ben, and chaste, and pore,
 Workers of Goddes word, not auditours?
 Therefore right as an hauke upon a fours 7520
 Up springeth into the aire, right so praieres
 Of charitable and chaste besy freres,
 Maken hir fours to Goddes eres two.
 Thomas, Thomas, so mote I ride or go,
 And by that lord that cleped is Seint Ive,
 N'ere thou our broder, shuldest thou not thrive.
 In our chapitre pray we day and night
 To Crist, that he thee sende hele and might
 Thy body for to welden hastily.

God wot, quod he, nothing therof fele I, 7530
 As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeres
 Have spended upon divers maner freres
 Ful many a pound, yet fare I never the bet;
 Certain my good have I almost beset:
 Farewel my good, for it is al ago.

The frere answered, O Thomas, dost thou so?

What

What nedeth you diverse freres to seche ?
 What nedeth him that hath a parfit leche,
 To sechen other leches in the toun ?
 Your inconstance is your confusion. 7540
 Hold ye than me, or elles our covent,
 To pray for you ben insufficient ?
 Thomas, that jape n'is not worth a mite ;
 Your maladie is for we han to lite.
 A, yeve that covent half a quarter otes ;
 And yeve that covent four and twenty grotes ;
 And yeve that frere a peny, and let him go :
 Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thing be so.
 What is a ferthing worth parted on twelve ?
 Lo, eche thing that is oned in himselve 7550
 Is more strong than whan it is yscatered.
 Thomas, of me thou shalt not ben yflatered,
 Thou woldest han our labour al for nought.
 The highe God, that all this world hath wrought,
 Saith, that the workman worthy is his hire.
 Thomas, nought of your trefor I desire
 As for myself, but that all our covent
 To pray for you is ay so diligent :
 And for to bidden Cristes owen chirche.
 Thomas, if ye wol lernen for to wirche, 7560
 Of bilding up of chirches may ye finde
 If it be good, in Thomas lif of Inde.

Ye ligger here ful of anger and of ire,
 With which the devil fet your herte on fire,
 And chiden here this holy innocent
 Your wif, that is so good and patient.
 And therefore trow me, Thomas, if thee lest,
 Ne strive not with thy wif, as for the best.
 And bere this word away now by thy faith,
 Touching swiche thing, lo, what the wise saith :7570

Within thy hous ne be thou no leon ;
 To thy suggets do non oppressioun ;
 Ne make thou not thin acquaintance to flee.

And yet, Thomas, eftsones charge I thee,
 Beware from ire that in thy bosom slepeth,
 Ware fro the serpent, that so slily crepeth
 Under the gras, and stingeth subtilly.
 Beware, my sone, and herken patiently,
 That twenty thousand men han lost hir lives
 For striving with hir lemmans and hir wives. 7580
 Now sith ye han so holy and meek a wif,
 What nedeth you, Thomas, to maken strif ?
 Ther n'is ywis no serpent so cruel,
 Whan man tredeth on his tail, ne half so fel,
 As woman is, whan she hath caught an ire ;
 Veray vengeance is than all hire desire.

Ire is a finne, on of the grete seven,
 Abhominable unto the God of heven,

And

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And to himself it is destruction.

This every lewed vicar and person 7590
Can say, how ire engendreth homicide ;
Ire is in soth executour of pride.

I coud of ire say so mochel forwe,
My tale shulde lasten til to-morwe.
And therfore pray I God both day and night,
An irous man God send him litel might.
It is gret harm, and certes gret pitee
To sette an irous man in high degree.

Whilom ther was an irous pottestat,
As saith Senek, that during his estat 7600
Upon a day out riden knightes two.
And, as fortune wold that it were so,
That on of hem came home, that other nought.
Anon the knight before the juge is brought,
That saide thus ; thou hast thy felaw slain,
For which I deme thee to the deth certain.
And to another knight commanded he ;
Go, lede him to the deth, I charge thee.
And happed, as they wenten by the wey
Toward the place ther as he shulde dey, 7610
The knight came, which men wenden had be ded.
Than thoughten they it was the beste rede
To lede hem bothe to the juge again.
They saiden, lord, the knight ne hath not slain

His

His felaw, here he stondeth hol alive.

Ye shull be ded, quod he, so mot I thrive,
That is to say, both on, and two, and three.
And to the firste knight right thus spake he.

I damned thee, thou must algate be ded :
And thou also must nedes lese thyn hed, 7620
For thou art cause why thy felaw deyeth.
And to the thridde knight right thus he feyeth,
Thou hast not don that I commanded thee.
And thus he did do slen hem alle three.

Irous Cambises was eke dronkelew,
And ay delighted him to ben a shrew.
And so befell, a lord of his meinie,
That loved vertuous moralitee,
Sayd on a day betwix hem two right thus :
A lord is lost, if he be vicious ; 7630
And dronkenesse is eke a foule record
Of any man, and namely of a lord.
Ther is ful many an eye and many an ere
Awaiting on a lord, and he n'ot wher.
For Goddes love drinke more attemprely :
Win maketh man to lesen wretchedly
His mind, and eke his limmes everich on.
The revers shalt thou see, quod he, anon,
And preve it by thyn owen experience,
That win ne doth to folk no swiche offence. 7640

Ther

302 THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

Ther is no win bereveth me my might
 Of hond, ne foot, ne of min eyen fight.
 And for despit he dranke mochel more
 An hundred part than he had don before,
 And right anon, this cursed irous wretche
 This knightes sone let before him fetche,
 Commanding him he shuld before him stond :
 And sodenly he took his bow in hond,
 And up the streng he pulled to his ere,
 And with an arwe he slow the child right ther. 7650

Now whether have I a fiker hond or non ?
 Quod he, Is all my might and minde agon ?
 Hath win bereved me min eyen fight ?

What shuld I tell the answer of the knight ?
 His son was slain, ther is no more to say.
 Beth ware therfore with lordes for to play,
 Singeth *Placebo*, and I shal if I can,
 But if it be unto a poure man :
 To a poure man men shuld his vices telle,
 But not to a lord, though he shuld go to helle. 7660

Lo, irous Cirus, thilke Persien,
 How he destroyed the river of Gisen,
 For that an hors of his was dreint therin,
 Whan that he wente Babilon to win :
 He made that the river was so final,
 That wimmen might it waden over al.

Lo,

THE SOMPNOURES TALE. 303

Lo, what said he, that so wel techen can?
 Ne be no felaw to non irous man,
 Ne with no wood man walke by the way,
 Lest thee repent; I wol no forther say. 7670

Now, Thomas, leve brother, leve thin ire,
 Thou shalt me find as just, as is a squire;
 Hold not the devils knif ay to thin herte,
 Thin anger doth thee all to fore finerte,
 But shew to me all thy confession.

Nay, quod the like man, by Seint Simon
 I have ben shriven this day of my curat;
 I have him told al holly min estat.
 Nedeth no mo to speke of it, sayth he,
 But if me list of min humilitee. 7680

Yeve me than of thy gold to make our cloistre,
 Quod he, for many a muscle and many an oistre,
 Whan other men han ben ful wel at ese,
 Hath been our food, our cloistre for to rese:
 And yet, God wot, unneth the fundament
 Parfourmed is, ne of our pavement
 N'is not a tile yet within our wones:
 By God we owen fourty pound for stones.
 Now help, Thomas, for him that harved helle,
 For elles mote we oure bokes felle,
 And if ye lacke oure predication,
 Than goth this world all to destruction.

304 THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

For who so fro this world wold us bereve,
 So God me save, Thomas, by your leve,
 He wold bereve out of this world the sonne.
 For who can teche and worken as we conne?
 And that is not of litel time, (quod he)
 But fithen Elie was, and Elisee,
 Han freres ben, that find I of record,
 In charitee, ythanked be our Lord.
 Now, Thomas, help for Seinte Charitee.

7700

And doun anon he sette him on his knee.

This fike man woxe wel neigh wood for ire,
 He wolde that the frere had ben a-fire
 With his false dissimulation.

Swiche thing as is in my possession,
 Quod he, that may I yeve you and non other:
 Ye fain me thus, how that I am your brother.
 Ye certes, quod this frere, ye, trusteth wel;
 I took our dame the letter of our sele.

7710

Now wel, quod he, and somwhat shal I yeve
 Unto your holy covent while I live;
 And in thin hond thou shalt it have anon,
 On this condition, and other non,
 That thou depart it so, my dere brother,
 That every frere have as moche as other:
 This shalt thou swere on thy profession
 Withouten fraud or cavilation.

I swere

THE SOMPNOURES TALE. 305

I swere it, quod the frere, upon my faith.
And therewithall his hond in his he layth ; 7720
Lo here my faith, in me shal be no lak.

Than put thin hond adoun right by my bak,
Saide this man, and grope wel behind,
Benethe my buttok, ther thou shalte find
A thing, that I have hid in privetee.
A, thought this frere, that shal go with me.
And doun his hond he launcheth to the clifte,
In hope for to finden ther a gifte.

And whan this fike man felte this frere
About his towel gropen thier and here, 7730
Amid his hond he let the frere a fart ;
Ther n'is no capel drawing in a cart,
That might han let a fart of swiche a soun.

The frere up ferte, as doth a wood leoun :
A, false cherl, quod he, for Goddes bones,
This hast thou in despit don for the nones :
Thou shalt abie this fart, if that I may.

His meinie, which that herden this affray,
Came leping in, and chafed out the frere,
And forth he goth with a ful angry chere, 7740
And fet his felaw, ther as lay his store :
He loked as it were a wilde bore,
And grinte with his teeth, so was he wroth.
A sturdy pas down to the court he goth,

306 THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

Wher as ther woned a man of gret honour,
 To whom that he was alway confessor :
 This worthy man was lord of that village.
 This frere came, as he were in a rage,
 Wher as this lord sat eting at his bord :
 Unnethes might the frere speke o word, 7750
 Til atte last he saide, God you see.

This lord gan loke, and saide, *Benedicite !*
 What ? frere John, what maner world is this ?
 I see wel that som thing ther is amis ;
 Ye loken as the wood were ful of theves.
 Sit doun anon, and tell me what your greve is,
 And it shal ben amended, if I may.

I have, quod he, had a despit to day,
 God yelde you, adoun in your village,
 That in this world ther n'is so poure a page, 7760
 That he n'olde have abhominatioun
 Of that I have received in youre toun :
 And yet ne greveth me nothing so sore,
 As that the olde cherl, with lokkes hore,
 Blasphemed hath oure holy covent eke.

Now, maister, quod this lord, I you beseke.

No maister, fire, quod he, but servitour,
 Though I have had in scole that honour.
 God liketh not, that men us Rabi call,
 Neither in market, ne in your large hall. 7770

No

THE SOMPNOURES TALE. 307

No force, quod he, but tell me all your grefe;
Sire, quod this Frere, an odious meschefe
This day betid is to min ordre, and me,
And so *per consequens* to eche degree
Of holy chirche, God amende it sone.

Sire, quod the lord, ye wot what is to don:
Distempre you not, ye ben my confessor.
Ye ben the salt of the erthe, and the favour;
For Goddes love your patience now hold;
Telle me your grefe. And he anon him told 7780
As ye han herd before, ye wot wel what.

The lady of the hous ay stille sat,
Til she had herde what the Frere said.

Ey, goddes moder, quod she, blisful maid,
Is ther ought elles? tell me faithfully.
Madame, quod he, how thinketh you therby?
How that me thinketh? quod she, so God me spede,
I say, a cherle hath don a cherles dede.
What shuld I say? God let him never the;
His fike hed is ful of vanitee; 7790
I hold him in a maner frenesie.

Madame, quod he, by God I shal not lie,
But I in other wise may ben awreke,
I shal diffame him over all, ther I speke;
This false blasphemour, that charged me
To parten that wol not departed be,

308 THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

To every man ylike, with meschance.

The lord sat stille, as he were in a trance,
And in his herte he rolled up and doun,
How had this cherl imaginatioun 7800
To shewen swiche a probleme to the frere.
Never erst or now ne herd I swiche matere;
I trow the Devil put it in his mind.
In all Arfinetrike shal ther no man find
Beforn this day of swiche a question.
Who shulde make a demonstration,
That every man shuld han ylike his part
As of a foun or favour of a fart?
O nice proude cherl, I shrewe his face.

Lo, fires, quod the lord, with harde grace, 7810
Who ever herd of swiche a thing or now?
To every man ylike? tell me how.
It is an impossible, it may not be.
Ey, nice cherl, God let him never the.
The rombling of a fart, and every foun,
N'is but of aire reverberatioun,
And ever it wasteth lite and lite away;
Ther n'is no man can demen, by my fay,
If that it were departed equally.
What? lo my cherl, lo yet how shrewedly 7820
Unto my confessor to-day he spake;
I hold him certain a demoniake.

Now

Now ete your mete, and let the cherl go play,
Let him go honge himself a devil way.

Now stood the lordes squier atte bord,
That carf his mete, and herde word by word
Of all this thing, of which I have you sayd.

My lord, quod he, be ye not evil apaid,
I coude telle for a goun-cloth
To you, fire frere, so that ye be not wroth, 7830
How that this fart shuld even ydeled be
Amonge your covent, if it liked thee.

Tell, quod the lord, and thou shalt have anon
A goun-cloth, by God and by feint John.

My lord, quod he, whan that the weder is faire,
Withouten winde, or pertourbing of aire,
Let bring a cart-whele here into this hall,
But loke that it have his spokes all;
Twelf spokes hath a cart-whele comunly;
And bring me than twelf freres, wete ye why? 7840
For threttene is a covent as I gesse:

Your confessor here for his worthinesse
Shal parfourn up the noumbre of his covent.
Than shull they knele adoun by on assent,
And to every spokes end in this manere
Ful fadly lay his nose shal a frere;
Your noble confessor, ther God him save,
Shal hold his nose upright under the nave.

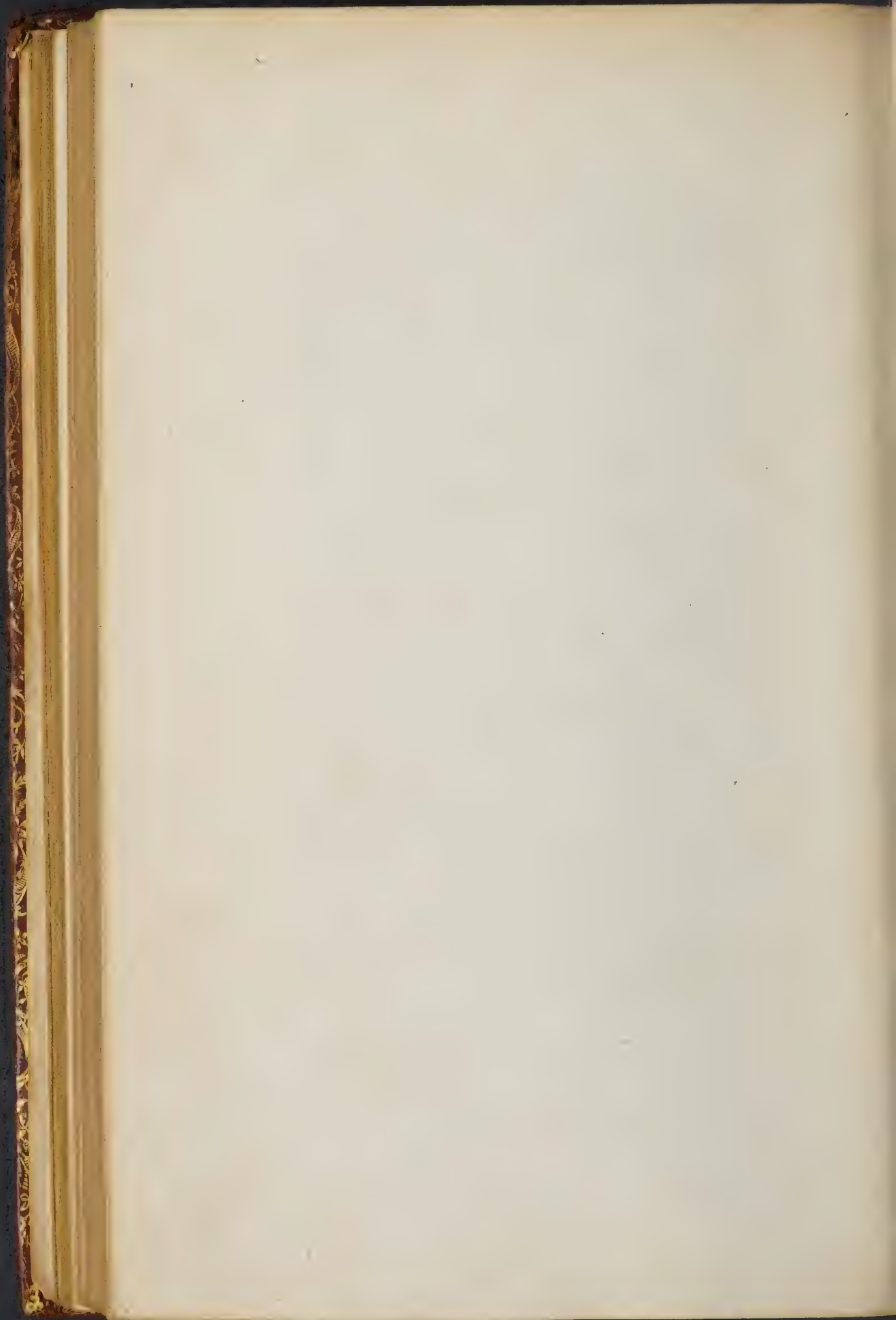
Than shal this cherl, with bely stif and tought
As any tabour, hider ben ybrought; 7850

310 THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

And set him on the whele right of this cart
 Upon the nave, and make him let a fart,
 And ye shull seen, up peril of my lif,
 By veray preef that is demonstratif,
 That equally the soun of it wol wende,
 And eke the stinke, unto the spokes ende,
 Save that this worthy man, your confessor,
 (Because he is a man of gret honour)
 Shal han the firste fruit, as reson is,
 The noble usage of freres yet it is, 7860
 The worthy men of hem shul first be served:
 And certainly he hath it wel deserved;
 He hath to-day taught us so moche good,
 With preching in the pulpit ther he stood,
 That I may vouchesauf, I say for me,
 He hadde the firste smel of fartes three,
 And so wold all his brethren hardely,
 He bereth him so faire and holyly.

The lord, the lady, and eche man, saye the frere,
 Sayden, that Jankin spake in this matere 7870
 As wel as Euclide, or elles Ptholomee.
 Touching the cherl, they sayden, subtiltee
 And highe wit made him speken as he spake;
 He n'is no fool, ne no demoniake.
 And Jankin hath ywonne a newe gowne;
 My tale is don, we ben almost at toun.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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